THE POLITICS OF THE FAMILY

AND FAMILY THERAPY:

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF

THEORY AND PRACTICE

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SUMMARY

This thesis aims to develop a new theoretical framework by which to understand family organisation and the processes of family therapy from a political perspective - a framework that will highlight (changing) power relationships rather than assume some notion of functional order. In constructing and evaluating such a theoretical framework, I will draw upon the traditions of critical theory and qualitative research. My starting points are an overview of existing critical understandings of 'the family', and an examination of how 'power' itself may be theorised in a rigorous manner. I will review how such perspectives may expose specific relations of oppression or recognition that underpin particular forms of organisation, from the scale of the social formation as a whole to that of 'the individual'. Psychoanalysis and discourse theory have provided concepts whereby to deconstruct the dynamics of 'the individual' - in particular the concept of 'subjectivity' - which I will develop further so as to encompass participation, not just in discursive structures, but also in structures of emotional and material relations.

In a critical appraisal of the various theoretical and practice traditions within family therapy, I will look at how the hegemony of systems theory has begun to be questioned and alternative metaphors for familial organisation proposed. However, as I will argue, none of these provide a satisfactory basis for understanding power relations in the family. I will therefore go on to apply a new conceptualisation of family organisation - that of 'subjectivity' - which is developed out of the theoretical traditions discussed earlier. I will theorise 'the family', not just as the context in which individual subjectivity may be constructed, but as an entity that may be seen to participate in the social formation as a subjectivity in its own right. Instead of understanding familial organisation as a natural outcome of self-regulating processes (as in systems theory), it may thus be seen to reflect the ways in which a family may have been constructed as a subjectivity in and by an oppressive social formation - its coherence only being maintained by a degree of internal violence and repression. Building on this, I will develop a theoretical framework by which to analyse, from a political perspective, the breakdown of family functioning and the specific ways in which the organisation of family life may be reconstructed through the processes of family therapy.

Following on from this, I will test out the value of the theoretical framework in an analysis of three examples of family therapy practice. My source material is transcripts taken from videotapes of actual family sessions, and these are analysed in terms of the evidence they provide of minute-by-minute changes in power relations within family organisation (often in response to particular interventions by the therapist). Out of this in-depth study of a small number of case examples, my primary aim will be to assess the practical value of the various elements of the theoretical framework in exposing how familial power relations have been structured and how (and whether) they may be modified during the course of family therapy. In turn, this may enable me to reach some preliminary conclusions as to how specific family therapy interventions may affect family organisation in ways that are either oppressive or empowering.

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1: INTRODUCTION

Researchers in the field of social theory have commented on the absence of an adequate theoretical framework with which to explain the processes and relations that underlie 'the family' in its various forms:

> "Social science does not have an adequate definition of the family, or a coherent set of categories from which to analyse it, or a rigorous conceptual scheme to specify what is significant about it" (Poster 1978 p.ix).

Unlike 'the individual' or 'society', the family has received relatively little theoretical attention, in particular from the 'critical' academic traditions such as those of Marxism or feminism. Reviewing the prospects for a more effective theorisation of the family, D.H.J. Morgan identified that it was these 'critical' traditions, together with the work on family dynamics arising from "the literature coming out of family therapy", that promised to provide the most productive ways forward - particularly through moves "to explore the points of intersection between those traditions" (1979 pp.5,16).

An interest in such issues also arose out of my own practice as a family therapist. I became aware that no existing theoretical framework was adequate in enabling me to evaluate the impact of my work on the power relations of a family: whether or not my interventions were empowering for a family as a whole in their dealings with external structures, or for those family members whose distress seemed to relate to their oppression, abuse and subordination within the family. I found that the

dominant model for understanding family processes - systems theory - failed to conceptualise family organisation in a way that permitted any analysis of structural power relations; of how issues of gender, generation, race and class could impinge on family life.

The political relations of family living may be seen to be somewhat contradictory. There is a mass of evidence to show that contemporary Western (and many other forms of familial organisation), are characterised by some degree of domination, exploitation and abuse - particularly of women and children (see, for example, Barrett and McIntosh 1982; Oakley 1974; Hotaling et al 1988). However, there is also evidence that, for women as well as for men and children, being part of some sort of a 'family' setting - especially one that provides a "confiding relationship" - can greatly reduce the possibility of personal breakdown (see Brown and Harris 1978; Cochrane 1983). There is also evidence that it can provide experiences of support and solidarity for members of oppressed groups, whether on the basis of class (see Humphries 1977) or race (see Carby 1982). There have been various attempts to set up familial relations in ways that are less oppressive (for example, the kibbutz and feminist or alternative households) - which have achieved varying degrees of success and, in the process, demonstrated how unstraightforward it is to achieve such goals.

There is substantial evidence that family therapy is a form of intervention that can achieve considerable change in family organisation - and thereby 'solve' the distress or problem behaviour presented by a particular family member (see Bennun 1986; Russell et al 1987; Chase and

Holmes 1990; Markus et al 1990). In the sense of achieving measurable changes, the 'effectiveness' of family therapy is not in doubt - although not all practitioners may achieve such results (see Howe 1989). However, research on family therapy has been bedevilled by confusion and contradiction as to what may be considered a positive outcome. Generally speaking, goals have been stated in terms of the restoration of some definition of 'normal' or 'healthy' functioning (see, for example, Minuchin 1974; Textor 1989). As such, they imply "specific value judgements about family issues ... such as the optimal level of conflict in the family, the respective roles of children and adults ... [and] the division of labour between male and female" (Libow 1981 p.173). These "value judgements" may, in turn, be seen to mask issues of family power and oppression behind a set of unquestioned assumptions about the 'rightness' of particular conventional forms of family organisation. It is still only a minority of family therapists that have begun to take seriously how issues of class, race and gender oppression may influence the ways that families are organised (see, for example, Kingston 1982; O'Brian 1990; Ussher 1991).

However, there has been a general tendency for such issues to be 'absorbed' within a methodology that is still predicated upon the assumptions of systems theory. It is only in the more radical critiques, arising from analyses of child abuse (Sgroi 1982; McLeod and Saraga 1988; Glaser and Frosh 1988) and of the position of women and men in the family (Goldner 1985; Caddick 1988; Perelberg and Miller 1990), that it has been suggested that power is not some peripheral issue, but that its operation is central to an understanding of how both

'functional' and 'dysfunctional' families are organised - thereby challenging the core assumptions of systems theory:

> "The use of systems theory ... has been criticised because it has not adequately dealt with power, or recognised the oppression that exists in many human relations, particularly between men and women" (Reimers and Dimmock 1990 p.168).

It is in response to such critiques that the purpose of therapy has begun to be understood in explicitly political terms. Ussher argues that "families have been shown to benefit from family therapy where changes in the family structure can be discussed" together with the "development of strategies to cope with discrimination" (1991 p.138). Others go further, for example, in the attempts to establish a feminist family therapy:

> "The goal is change, not adjustment; social change, family change, individual change, with the intent to transform the social relations that define men's and women's existence" (Goodrich et al 1988 p.12).

Such views are also beginning to permeate the mainstream of family therapy practice and research, and the search has started for revised theoretical frameworks that can illuminate familial power relations as a way of understanding family distress and the possibilities for change:

> "The state of the art in the family therapy research field has moved beyond the constricting and misleading implications of the 'circular' and 'recursive' versions of systems theory [which] fail to incorporate ... such problems as ... gender inequality, individual psychodynamics ... and entrenched social class and racial disadvantage. For the field of family therapy to maintain or regain

> its earlier vitality, these topics must be addressed... Systems theory provided a powerful start-up orientation for family therapy, but major reconstruction of this theoretical framework is now required" (Wynne 1988 p.273).

It is my purpose to take this debate forward and to develop a new theoretical framework by which to understand family organisation and dynamics from a political perspective - a framework that can highlight the presence of unequal power relationships rather than emphasise some notion of functional order, and can relate power issues within a family organisation both to the structural power relations of the social formation and to issues of conflict and repression at the scale of an individual family member.

The second element of this research is to test out the value of this framework in relation to examples of family therapy practice: how useful is it in exposing what may be going on in terms of changing power relations within a family (and between therapist and family). Out of this may also emerge some preliminary conclusions as to the impact (empowering or otherwise) of certain forms of intervention. While it is beyond the scope of this research to attempt any overall evaluation of current family therapy practice, such conclusions may be useful in indicating aspects that may have the potential to be empowering. A direction for future research would be to evaluate new family therapy approaches that may be derived from such critical perspectives (both in terms of theory and practice) - and hence to establish how (and whether) an empowering family therapy practice may be possible.

Overview of thesis

This thesis aims to develop a new theoretical framework by which to understand family organisation and the processes of family therapy from a political perspective - a framework that will highlight (changing) power relationships rather than assume some notion of functional order. In constructing and evaluating such a theoretical framework, I will draw upon the traditions of critical theory and qualitative research. My starting points are an overview of existing critical understandings of 'the family', and an examination of how 'power' itself may be theorised in a rigorous manner. I will review how such perspectives may expose specific relations of oppression or recognition that underpin particular forms of organisation, from the scale of the social formation as a whole to that of 'the individual'. Psychoanalysis and discourse theory have provided concepts whereby to deconstruct the dynamics of 'the individual' - in particular the concept of 'subjectivity' - which I will develop further so as to encompass participation, not just in discursive structures, but also in structures of emotional and material relations.

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2: APPROACHES TO THEORY

Within the social sciences, a number of approaches to theory have been employed. Broadly speaking, following Habermas (1968), these may be seen to fall into one of three traditions: positivism (or empiricism), humanism (or idealism), and critical theory. Habermas argues that each of these rely on fundamentally different asssumptions as to what there is to be known about human experience and interaction, how theory should be constructed and what is its purpose. As will be seen later, each tradition also implies its own particular research methodology.

Positivism derives its approach from what has been seen to be the method of natural science, taking this to be appropriate for the study of human phenomena (for example, see Popper, 1972). What is studied is simply the world of appearances - that which is directly observable. Questions of 'meaning' are not considered relevant. There is assumed to be a "social order" (akin to the world of physics) that is essentially pre-given and objective, and which determines that events occur according to orderly rules that are unchanging over time or place. Thus it is assumed that, once the relevant variables are specified, the outcome of a social situation may be predicted. In practice, exact prediction has proved to be impossible, so it has come to be assumed that social phenomena are the result of the operation of universal laws overlaid with random variation, thus allowing predictions to be made on the basis of statistical probability. The value of positivism in the construction

of social theory has been subject to much criticism in recent years in terms of its underlying assumptions, both about what there is 'out there' in the social world to be studied, and about how this should be done (see Bottomore and Nisbet 1979).

What positivism disallows, a priori, is the possibility that the 'social order' may be subject to processes of historical change, or to vary as between specific cultural contexts. Similarly, subjective experience is disregarded as being inappropriate for study, and so the thinking and behaviour of human 'objects' are seen as resulting (as with atoms or molecules) from certain essential and predictable qualities, and certain predictable processes of interaction. Thus capitalism may be explained as the cumulative actions of "rational economic man", and conformity to social norms as the outcome of behavioural conditioning. If such supposedly 'natural' laws could be established, then it would appear futile to resist or to try and change the "social order" in any way (see Keat and Urry 1975). Habermas argues that the ultimate purpose of positivist knowledge is to enhance the efficiency of the existing social order by developing techniques to understand and control deviance. Considered as an ideology, positivism may be seen to 'naturalise' current norms as universal "laws", thereby legitimating the existing power relations of the current social formation.

Humanism, in many ways, represents the antithesis of the method of natural science. It draws on the philosophical traditions of hermeneutics and existentialism, and has been applied to social theory within approaches such as phenomenology, symbolic interactionism,

verstehen sociology and psychoanalysis (see Smart 1976; Williams 1976). No general laws are assumed: instead a social situation is examined in terms of the unique subjective experience of the actors concerned. Whereas positivism studies the objective appearances of social phenomena, humanism seeks to examine the underlying "meaning" of what is going on, particularly to those directly involved. In general, all social interaction is understood in terms of people's subjective experience and world-view, whether based on rational intention or emotional experience. Consequently, this approach tends to emphasise the possibility of people being self-consciously in control of their own lives - able to construct "their world" for themselves. In this way, any reality of social determination and oppression that impinges on this apparent existential freedom is discounted from the analysis. Indeed, the existence of any such external reality of power relations is ultimately denied. The exclusive emphasis on the subjective leads to the position of constructivism: what is there is only what people consensually believe to be there (see Berger and Luckman 1967). As this consensus is not seen as being constructed within the context of any form of political domination, we are left with the conclusion that we are oppressed only in how we (consensually) choose to see the world.

As Althusser argues, humanism and positivism between them "have constituted the basic opposition in the bourgeois world outlook" (1971 p.17). This dualistic mode of thought constructs people both as autonomous subjects free to go out and construct their own world, and as predictable objects that naturally conform to a pre-given social order. Each approach selectively disregards the aspects of what is studied that

could lead to consciousness of power issues and social change. Positivism dismisses 'power' as something that is subjective or metaphysical - it cannot be directly observed or measured. Humanism dismisses the possibility that external power structures can have a real and determining impact on personal experience. Thus, on the one hand, we are invited to see that there must be something wrong with us if we fail to fit comfortably into existing social relations; on the other, we are invited to see any experience of oppression as individual and subjective, divorced from any reality of structural powerlessness.

Critical theory seeks to gain knowledge, not of consistent appearances, nor of the experience of 'free' subjects, but of real social relations that underlie those appearances and structure those experiences of subjectivity (for a fuller discussion of the distinction between the "observable" and the "real", see Keat and Urry 1975). Critical theory involves a dialectical synthesis of the bourgeois dualism between positivism and humanism. The existing social order is no longer seen as a natural pre-given but as a historical moment in the power struggles between various human subjects acting individually and collectively. Similarly, each human subject is seen to be simultaneously constructed by and constructing the social relations in which s/he is situated:

> "It is the task of social theory to seek to overcome the traditional dualisms of subject and object in the analysis of social reproduction... We have to avoid any account of socialisation which presumes either that the subject is determined by the social object (the individual as simply moulded by society); or, by contrast,

which takes subjectivity for granted as an inherent characteristic of human beings, not in need of explication" (Giddens 1979 p.120).

The standpoint of the enquirer is very different: instead of reifying the status quo or creating the illusion of self-determination, the purpose of critical theory is to achieve insight into the reality of social oppression, and thereby to provide "a basis for reform of the structure in question" (Poster 1978 p.xix). Critical theory does not take the appearance of social interactions at face value, but seeks to explain them in terms of real underlying structural relations between diferent sections of the society, such as those between black people and white people, women and men, or the working class and the capitalist class. These power relations are not seen as universal or eternal, but instead subject to constant struggle and renegotiation. The analyses of socialism, feminism and anti-racism have each been 'critical' of the appearances of social relations by referring to the real structural power relations that underlie them. The development of critical theory has also proceeded through the reconstruction of existing (usually humanist) theory in the light of such frameworks, for example, the re-reading of psychoanalysis from Marxist or feminist perspectives (see Marcuse 1972; Mitchell 1975). Although, given the principles upon which postivist theory is founded, it can offer little in the way of 'critical' insight, empirical research can be useful in checking out the conclusions from theory against what may be directly measured.

Within the Marxist tradition, the clearest statements about what constitutes a rigorous or 'scientific' approach have been formulated by

Louis Althusser. He makes an absolute distinction between "scientific practice", the study of (hidden) structural relations, and "ideological practice" which fails to go beyond appearances or examine the ideologically constructed nature of "common-sense" concepts and language. He states that a scientific method must start at the level of theory, "the concrete in thought", and constitute a "theoretical object" for study. This theoretical object will be a particular hypothesised structure underlying a set of observable social relations. However, in order to be able to construct such a theoretical object, one must first go through a rather awkward stage of simultaneously describing and analysing experience - the construction of "descriptive theory":

> "One must envisage this phase as a transitional one, necessary to the development of the theory. That it is transitional is inscribed in my expression: 'descriptive theory'... The term theory 'clashes' to some extent with the adjective 'descriptive' which I have attached to it" (Althusser 1971 p.138).

The next stage, still at the level of theory, is the construction of the 'problematic': the theorising of the various structures and relations that surround and affect the theoretical object. It is only after this stage that it is possible to start to interpret and make sense of what may be observed at the phenomenal level, and hence determine how this may be transformed in order to promote social justice.

The stages of Althusser's method may be illustrated by his research into the nature and operation of 'The State'. He starts by using the Marxian concept of "class" in order to construct a first level of "descriptive theory" through which can be glimpsed, underlying the phenomenal forms

of political "democracy", "the dictatorship of the bourgeiosie" (ibid. p.139). He stresses the need to avoid falling into the positivist trap of further description of particular phenomenal forms of governmental organisation that confuse rather than illuminate underlying strucural relations:

> "The accumulation of facts within the definition of the State may multiply examples, but it does not really advance ... the development of the theory" (ibid. p.140).

Instead one must work at the level of theory until key concepts emerge that expose the reality of oppression within the observed structures of social relationships. One is then able to reflect, "Yes, that's how it is, that's really true!" (ibid. p.139). In Althusser's theorisation of 'The State', the theoretical breakthrough comes with his development of the concept of Ideological State Apparatuses, by which he is able to expose the real power relations, operating at the level of *ideology*, underlying a wide variety of institutions that are not directly part of the governmental machine, such as the Church, the Law, political parties, the media and the educational system.

From the perspective of radical feminism, Christine Delphy argues for similar criteria for a 'scientific' method:

> "The explanatory power of a theory ... is tied to its capacity ... to go beyond the phenomenal reality.... The belief that the reason for the existence of things is to be found beyond their appearance, that it is 'hidden', is integral to scientific procedure... The initial 'objects' are in any case not 'pure' facts, but rather the immediate perception of things, informed in a non-explicit fashion

> by a certain view of the world... The more a theory ... is held in fief to immediate perception, [the more] it must stick to the 'facts', the more it is ideological" (1984 pp.21-2).

For Delphy, the purpose of probing beneath the surface is to establish the reality of power relations:

> "A feminist - or a proletarian - science aims at explaining oppression. In order to do this, it has to start with oppression. If it is coherent, it inevitably comes up with a theory of history in which history is seen in terms of the domination of some social groups by others" (ibid. p.212).

In line with Althusser's criteria for a 'scientific' method, I will start my research at the level of theory, firstly in terms of clarifying a critical understanding of 'power' itself, and secondly reviewing existing critical perspectives on the family, many of which would best be seen as 'descriptive' rather than 'scientific' theory. It is out of this that I will construct a theoretical framework by which to probe beneath the various phenomenal forms taken by my chosen theoretical object, the ensemble of internal and external relations that constitute 'the family'. Following Delphy, I would seek to understand the organisation of 'the family', not in terms of any regularities of appearance, but in terms of how it reflects and embodies relationships of unequal power and oppression. Out of these perspectives, I will attempt to construct some key theoretical concepts by which to view the process of family breakdown and family therapy so as to be able to "recognise the facts of oppression" with "a very special kind of obviousness" (Althusser 1971 p.139).

3: THEORISING RELATIONS OF POWER

In this chapter, I will look at what may be meant by 'power' from a critical perspective, and at how power relations have been theorised within various anti-oppresive traditions. Structures of oppression or mutual support may be seen to exist, not just in the context of material relations, but also those of ideology and emotionality. I will look at how this interlocking matrix of power relations may determine specific forms of social organisation, from the nation state to institutions such as the family. In the following Chapter, I will extend this analysis to examine how what is conventionally seen as the 'individual' may also be deconstructed in terms of intersecting power relations, and how this, in turn, leads us to refine our understanding of power relations.

Defining concepts of power

Within any critical tradition, 'power' is understood as describing a *relationship between* people. However, it a concept that has been understood very differently within the other theoretical traditions that were discussed in the last Chapter. Within the bourgeois traditions of humanism and positivism, any concepts of power relations are rendered peripheral to an analysis of social and interpersonal processes, thereby maintaining the illusion that the current organisation of social relations is somehow fair and natural. The real complexity of power relations disappears when they have to be reduced either to subjective experiences or to objective entities. The two perspectives cannot be

brought together as long as we remain caught between the poles of the dualism that is central to bourgeois thought.

Any concepts of power relations *between* people are marginalised within the humanist tradition where the emphasis is on the subjective thought, experience and responsibility of the 'individual', unconstrained by any social context. The only notions of power that are permitted are those which arise within the assumed autonomy of the individual subject. For example, within the psychology of the human potential movement, a subjective sense of 'power' is seen as emerging from within each individual as s/he realises her/his latent capabilities. Similarly, 'power' is not a material entity that lends itself to measurement within the positivist tradition. Thus, within the economics of the "Free Market", structural inequalities of power do not appear within the analysis, as opportunities are seen to be equally available to all participants. Within functionalist sociology, an 'objective' concept of power emerges, not as a relationship that can divide people into unequal groups, but as the "generalised capacity of a social system to get things done in the interest of collective goals" (Parsons 1960 p.181). In line with this, it then appears 'natural' for the 'power' of this consensual social order to be vested in those in existing positions of authority, such as statesmen, fathers, industrialists and community leaders. In this way, this 'theoretical' perspective may be seen as nothing more than an ideological underpinning of the status quo.

By contrast, power relations between people are central to feminist and other critical perspectives. Baker Miller (1982) starts with a

distinction between conventionally male definitions of power - "to exercise dominion or to dominate" - as against women's familiarity in using power "in the service of others" through acting as nurturers (a concept of power that is rendered almost invisible within the patriarchal social order). Surrey takes the argument further and distinguishes two strands within male constructions of power, "mastery" over others and self-determination of one's own life (1987 p.4). (There is an obvious connection between these two understandings of power and the world-views underlying the bourgeois intellectual traditions of, respectively, positivism and humanism). Both definitions are based on an ideology of separateness and competition that excludes any positive sense of relatedness with others.

She contrasts such concepts of power with one that draws on the specific experience of women and also emerges from anti-imperialist practice of Freire (1970). She sees in the principles of consciousness raising and collective action the operation of a very different sort of power, a power that is not dissimilar to the "nurturing" power (power for others) that women are familiar with using in their everyday lives (but often at the expense of their own choices and achievement). Such abilities and sensitivities may be used instead for the mutual benefit of self *and* others. Through connecting with others in a common position, people have the possibility of creating a "power together" that is infinitely more potent than the separateness of "self-determination":

> "Personal empowerment can be viewed only through the larger lens of power through connection, i.e. through the establishment of mutually empathic and mutually empowering relationships" (ibid p.3).

This distinction between, on the one hand, 'power over', which forms the basis of relations of oppression and, on the other, 'power together', which is at the heart of consciousness raising and collective action, provides a crucial underpinning for any critical understanding of social relations. 'Power over' must first be understood in collective terms as the power of one group to dominate or exploit another through their collective control over economic or political resources. It may also be seen that such a collective power relation will have a determining effect at the scale of individual relationships, and inform the way in which any member of the oppressor group may interact with any member of the oppressed. Set against this, we have 'power together' which not only offers the basis for mutually enhancing relationships, but also for the organisation of support, self-help and consciousness raising groups. Such conceptualisations of power relate to people's ability to make choices. In this way, oppression may be understood as the (collective) exercise of choices that restrict the choices open to others, while empowerment may be seen as the (collective) opening up of choice, both for oneself and for others in similarly oppressed positions. However, as will be seen later, such definitions will have to be revised in the light of a critical understanding of individual subjectivity.

Building on these distinctions, it is possible to see three possible modes by which a person may transact with others. If s/he is situated in a position of 'power over', s/he may enter into transactions of *domination* - demanding that others meet her/his wants and needs at the expense of their own. Conversely, if s/he is on the receiving end of such a power relationship, s/he may have no choice but to enter into

transactions of *subordination* - actively putting her/himself down as the only available way of having a relationship with the other at all. Finally, if two people are situated such that neither is exerting 'power over' the other, they may enter into transactions of (mutual) *recognition*. Transacting in this way is the basis both of nurturing one another and of establishing 'power together'. Recognition of the other need not be at one's own expense (as would be the case from positions of subordination and domination, as in conventional constructions of 'mothering'), but can open up choices for both parties.

Within the tradition of dialectical materialism (both Marxist and feminist), power is seen in terms of differential access to the resources that are necessary for survival. In any historically occuring social formation, certain social groups may be identified as being in a position to control the way resources and responsibilities are distributed. In this way, the degree to which people can be in control of the way they live, work and make intimate relationships has depended on membership or non-membership of categories such as race, gender or social class. While these categories may appear to reflect 'natural' differences, corresponding to supposed innate characteristics of, say, "the English", "men", or "the working classes", they actually connote who does and does not have power within a particular social formation.

While materialist analyses have exposed injustices in the organisation of economic production and consumption, this has in turn sparked off a growing awareness of how power struggles between groups may take place, just as importantly, at other 'levels' of the social formation, such as

in the operation of ideology (for example, in how 'knowledge' and 'common sense', social customs and institutions, and even language itself, may be manipulated in order to secure the power of one social group over another). In this way, a concept of power may be developed which recognises how the collective oppression of one group by another may be achieved through their privileged access to key resources, practices and modes of expression - not only the means of material production, but also the means of emotional or ideological production (such as the media or cultural determinants of emotional expression).

In his historical 'deconstructions' of whole bodies of attitudes and practices (for example, in relation to 'madness' or 'sexuality'), Foucault has focused on the minutiae of the operation of power relations in terms of who has access to specific "knowledges" and practices. However, he has tended to conceptualise power, not as a structural relationship between people, but "as a productive network which runs through the whole social body" (1985 p.91). In this way, he can tend to dissociate 'power' from 'oppression', ultimately leading him towards the humanist assumption of a universal "will to power" (Henriques et al 1984 p.116). Thus, while we have much to learn from Foucault in terms of the power implications of apparently minute shifts in position within a discursive structure, it is crucial that these are seen as specific instances of structural power relations based on gender, race or class. In this way, empowerment may come to be seen, not as some once-and-for-all shift in social relations, but as an incremental process of interlinked struggles: people individually and collectively gaining, losing and then regaining opportunitites for expression or activity.

Structural power relations: Overview

Existing and past social formations may be analysed in terms of the operation of various sets of power relations (such as those of imperialism, patriarchy or class struggle). In each case, social relations may be understood in terms of how a ruling group (race, gender or class) is able to exploit or oppress the daily life of subordinate groups by a variety of economic, ideological, political and emotional means. These subordinated groups in turn may, over time, organise to mount more or less successful resistance against their oppression. To use Gramsci's phrase (1971), this constant "war of position" between the forces of oppression and of resistance may be seen as providing the motive force for historical change, whether at the scale of the social formation as a whole or at the scale of personal relationships. If we integrate this within the wider perspective outlined above, the process of history may be understood not only in terms of the 'power over' exerted by ruling groups, but also in terms of the 'power together' generated by oppressed groups organising their resistance and fighting for their collective control over their means of survival and expression. At any historical instance, the tension and interaction between the forces of oppression ('power over') and those of empowerment ('power together') may be seen to underlie the specific ways in which social relations can be organised - whether at the scale of the social formation as a whole or at the scale of the individual person.

If we look at the resistance against oppression that has been mounted over the course of history, instances of collective empowerment may be

found both in the informal everyday interaction of people with common experiences, or in more structured peer organisations such as women's consciousness raising groups, trade unions or black solidarity organisations. However, whatever the intentions of the parties involved, it has proved far more problematic to achieve 'power together' between members of oppressor and oppressed groups, even if they also share some common elements of experience. Black women have felt excluded and patronised within the women's movement and women have felt oppressed and marginalised by men within the trade union movement (see, for example, Davis, 1982).

If we turn to the look at the changing organisation of the forces of oppression, we find that ruling groups themselves have been involved in internal struggles, and their composition may be seen to have changed over time (for example, the passing of control from the landed aristocracy to the capitalist class during the industrial revolution):

> "The ruling elite, while it does often have some interests in common with all of its members, does not have all interests in common with all of its members. In other words, the ruling elite - or, more correctly, ruling elites - is not monolithic. Indeed the battles among them are often vicious" (Hodge et al 1975 p.34).

Thus, in specific historical instances, there may be internal contradictions within the processes of oppression, such that the interests of, say, capitalism and patriarchy may come to be at odds. The specific struggles that are being waged in each case are, to some extent, autonomous from one another. Each experience of oppression may

suggest different definitions of who constitutes the ruling group and the oppressed groups. In each case, the ruling group may seek to incorporate a different set of 'allies' in securing the oppression of an underclass. While it seems highly significant that most capitalists are white and male (although not exclusively so), nevertheless working class men may also be seen to act oppressively to women, and white women may be in an oppressive position with respect to black women. Such contradictions have led to fruitless debates among the theorists of different oppressed groups as to whether one mode of oppression is, in some way, more fundamental than any other (see, for example, Meulenbelt et al 1984; Sargent et al 1981). I would see it as more productive to pursue (and, if necessary, extend) what Davis (1982) has termed the "triple jeopardy analysis": the power relations of the social formation are understood in terms of "the *simultaneous* oppression of patriarchy, class and race" (Carby 1982).

Arising out of this, there is the issue of whether other instances of discrimination, for example on the basis of sexual orientation, age or disability, are simply reflections of these three modes of oppression, or whether they should be theorised as separate modes of oppression in their own right (see, for example, Jeffreys 1990; Bytheway and Johnson 1990). Connel warns that "any number of dimensions can be added... Yet the more sophisticated the cross-classification becomes, the more firmly is the analysis embedded in a static logic of categories" (1987 p.59). Therefore, at this stage, I will seek to understand "heterosexism", "ageism" and "disablism" in terms of the forgoing 'triple jeopardy analysis', rather than theorising them as separate modes of social

oppression in their own right (although such theorisations may ultimately prove to be necessary).

Many such instances of discrimination may be seen to relate, at least in part, to the social relations of feudalism/capitalism, imperialism and/or patriarchy. For example, members of feudal, capitalist or imperialist wealth-owning groups are generally able to maintain their privileged position despite the onset of disability or old age, whereas members of subordinated groups take on a doubly devalued status as soon as they become unproductive. Patronage, as a means of providing material support that simultaneously subordinates and stigmatises the recipient, may be seen to be a characteristic of feudal social relations that still survives in the organisation of much welfare provision. However, even the minimal provision of 'welfare' for older and disabled people is undermined by the capitalist ideology of 'free competition', which legitimates a systematic diversion of resources *away* from those who need them most. Finally, under patriarchal social formations, membership of the ruling group may be denoted by specific definitions of 'manhood' or 'masculinity' - often in terms of characteristics such as sexual orientation, physical strength or position within a generational hierarchy - which may be seen to disqualify other groups such as younger, older, gay or disabled men. Such definitions of 'masculinity' produce complementary definitions of 'femininity' in terms of a woman's usefulness to men's needs and desires. Thus women who, due to age or disability, are not available to provide domestic care for men or children, or who choose not to make themselves sexually available to men, face similar (or even greater) disqualification.

Analysis of class oppression

The first materialist analysis to be made of power relations was Marx's theory of class conflict. He was most rigorous in his analysis of the economic exploitation of the working class under capitalism, showing how the capitalist class had gained monopoly control over the material resources necessary for industrial production (factories and machinery), so that working people had no independent means of support and were thereby forced to survive by selling their labour power on an individual basis at well below its use value to the capitalist. This mode of organisation was in contrast to the earlier feudal social formation in which the former ruling class, the aristocracy, was in a position to expropriate the labour power of the peasant class through their monopoly ownership of land. Despite his emphasis on material relations, Marx also laid the foundations in his earlier work for a critical analysis of class struggle at the level of ideological or political activity:

> "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas... The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production... They ... regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age... The dominant idea ... is expressed as an eternal law. (Marx, 1965, p.65).

Subsequent theorists, such as Gramsci and Althusser, have suggested that what goes on at the level of ideology is not simply determined by the positions reached in the class struggle at the level of material relations. Instead, social discourse is seen as an arena for power

struggle in its own right, although the power relations of the economic base are seen as determinant "in the last instance". The struggle, however, is an unequal one since oppressed groups have to "live even their revolt against the domination of the system within the framework of the dominant ideology" (Poulantzas, 1973 p.223). As will be seen later, discourse theory has taken further the study of institutions and practices at the level of ideology as sites of power struggles in their own right.

Although Marx recognised the impact of capitalist power relations at the level of emotional experience, his early writings on this subject tended to fall more within the tradition of humanist idealism. He argued that capitalist ownership of production not only alienates the worker from "contemplating himself in a world that he has created" (1959 p.76), but also from the relationship he would otherwise have with the person who subsequently buys and recognises the value of what he has made:

> "An immediate consequence of the fact that man is estranged from the product of his labour ... is the estrangement of man from man... What applies to man's relation to his work, to the product of his labour and to himself also holds of man's relation to other men, and to the other man's labour and object of labour" (1959 p.77).

This analysis rested on idealist assumptions about the "essential" nature of the working man. We are left with a rather hollow narcissistic vision of "man" who, by his industry, "duplicates himself", a vision which ignored any more intimate emotionality among men (and which totally discounted the experience of women, both at home and at the workplace).

Analysis of patriarchal oppression

A materialist analysis along similar lines has been developed in relation to patriarchy:

> "Patriarchy ... is a structure ... whereby property, the means of production and exchange values, is appropriated by men, and whereby this property relation informs household and family relations in such a way that men may appropriate the labour and the actual persons of women" (Kuhn and Wolpe 1978 p.65).

This cannot be subsumed within a Marxist analysis, since patriarchy operates within a separate economic base, that of the "domestic mode of production" - housework and childcare - in which "those exploited ... are not *paid* but rather *maintained*" within a neo-feudal household organisation (Delphy 1984 p.18). This organisation is governed by the rules of inheritance, "patrimonial transmision", which "creates possessors and non-possessors within each family" (ibid. p.19). It also interlinks with the organisation of the capitalist mode of production to circumscribe women's economic opportunities outside the home, through "systematic discrimination ... in the *wage* labour market" (ibid. p.20).

In addition to exploiting their domestic labour, patriarchy also exercises "control of women's fertility and sexuality in monogamous marriage" as a means of guaranteeing the path of inheritance (McDonough and Harrison, (1978 p.40). At the same time, the extra-marital sexual domination of women is legitimated through such institutions as prostitution and pornography, resulting in the construction of 'femininity' in relation to the "twin images of women as, on the one

hand, the sexual property of men and, on the other, the chaste mothers of their children. The madonna/whore dichotomy runs through western patriarchal culture as the means whereby men have sought to ensure both the sanctity and inheritance of their families and their extra-familial sexual pleasure" (Barrett 1980 p.45).

The operation of patriarchy may also be reflected in particular definitions of 'masculinity' that have held sway at specific moments in history - how men have constructed themselves *in order to* control and exploit women and, just as crucially, other men. This may interlink with processes of class exploitation, for example producing the contradictory images of the "hard-working, hard-fighting 'puritan' who adheres to a production ethic of duty before pleasure", and the "aristocratic 'playboy' who lives according to an ethic of leisure and sensual indulgence" (Hoch 1979 p.118). Hegemonic forms of masculinity have set up hierarchical power relations, both between men and women, and also between certain categories of men:

> "Heterosexual masculinity was historically constructed by the exclusion of particular forms of desire and relationship, which were split off into marginalised masculinities, most significantly homosexual" (Connel 1987 p.161).

Young, old, gay or 'effeminate' men have, at various times, been oppressed within patriarchal sexual relations - those "whose situations are related in different ways to the overall logic of the subordination of women to men". Indeed, "any kind of powerlessness, or refusal to compete" becomes defined in terms of effeminacy or "the imagery of homosexuality" (Carrigan et al 1987 p.86).

Through the domestic relations of patriarchy, men have traditionally dominated women, children and (sometimes) older relatives, structuring oppression on the basis of generation as well as gender. (Under feudal social formations, such customary rights of domination would have extended to younger siblings, other relatives and servants). Those living under the same roof would typically have (some of) their labour power and property rights subordinated to the rule of the head of the household (a position, although male-defined, that may actually be occupied by a woman on a temporary basis in the absence of an appropriate male heir). Such arrangements may be enforced both by law and by social convention. In this instance, it may be seen not to be a person's chronological age that defines their subordination, only their relationship to the defined head of the household.

Such processes of economic and sexual exploitation are underpinned by the organised and systematic use (or threat) of physical force. As Connell argues, "The control of the means of violence by some men rather than by any women remains a central fact" (1987 p.153). Historical analysis reveals that men have achieved positions of domination through the organisation of military action or policing, and also through the oppresive use of physical strength in domestic or street violence. As Fernbach (1981) suggests, it is not only women who are subjected to this intimidation, but also those categories of men who who fall outside prevailing definitions of 'manhood' or 'masculinity' (for example, gay men, youths or older men).

In its regulation of sexuality inside and outside the family, patriarchy may be seen to interlink with ideologies of heterosexism, resulting in specific experiences of oppression for gay women and men:

> "A fundamental element of modern hegemonic masculinity [is] that one sex (women) exists as a potential sexual object... The institutionalisation of heterosexuality, as in the family, [is] achieved only by considerable effort, and at considerable cost" (Carrigan et al 1987 p.86. See also Barrett 1980 pp.46-7).

By patriarchal definition, women must always be ready to subject themselves as sexual objects for men (inside or outside marriage), so the very possibility of lesbian orientation may be denied, or it may be constructed as 'deviant', a joke, or as a subject for male sexual gratification. (Under British law, female homosexuality has had no existence). By contrast, under different social formations, the ruling group of men have either prohibited homosexual relations altogether, or have practiced it in specific circumstances (for example, with subordinates), according to the hegemonic construction of masculinity at the time.

The construction of a separate homosexual 'identity' that distinguished certain men from the prevailing definition of masculinity may be seen to have arisen through specific struggles in the late nineteenth century:

> "Just as 'the housewife', 'the prostitute' and 'the child' are historically specific 'types' that should be understood in the context of the [patriarchal] gender relations of the time, so too 'the homosexual' represents the modern definition of a new 'type' of adult male" (Carrigan et al p.87).

Ruling groups of men used medical and legal discourses in order to control, subordinate and marginalise male homosexual activity by specifically naming it, constructing it as a 'disease' and making its 'practices' illegal. However, in doing so, they inadvertently provided gay men with the terms by which to identify themselves and 'come out' - and construct an alternative 'masculinity' (see Foucault 1981).

It may be seen that, at various historical instances, changes in the form of patriarchal and of class oppression have given rise to contradictions within the organisation of the ruling group, whether on the basis of definitions of masculinity and femininity, or on the basis of fundamental differences of interest between patriarchy and feudalism/capitalism. For example, as will be discussed later on, in the early stages of the industrial revolution, the opportunities for women and children to sell their labour power individually to the factory owners, while satisfying the capitalists' desire for plentiful cheap labour, undermined the former patriarchal organisation in which the man of the house directly controlled the labour of his whole family unit. In the event, this tendency was countered, and patriarchy reasserted, through the medium of protective legislation regulating the employment of women and children, a move which has actually reduced the possibilities for the capitalist exploitation of a larger workforce. In the following section, I will examine how processes of imperialist oppresion may interlink with, but also act in contradiction to, processes of patriarchal and class oppression.

Analysis of racist and imperialist oppression

Materialist analyses of imperialism have concentrated on the exploitation of the labour of subordinated races through practices such as slavery and job discrimination, and also through the colonial domination of third world economies by the West. Intersecting with this are analyses of the ideological construction of racist oppression:

> "That the people of a culture should view themselves as culturally superior is certainly common... But not so common is the feature contained in Western cultural thinking, that the superior *should control* the inferior. It is this kind of thinking, which emphasises the value placed on control, that produces a missionary imperialism... Western control over non-Western peoples is therefore considered morally defensible..." (Hodge et al, 1975 p.3)

The development of such imperialist attitudes may be seen in nineteenth century English political discourse:

> "Race implies difference and difference implies superiority, and superiority leads to predominance" (Disraeli, quoted in Walvin 1984 p.40)

Cohen takes this further in analysing how the white ruling class (in conjunction with the rest of the white population constructed together as a "racial" group) is able to maintain and extend its power over non-white groups by defining "society" as "white society" at the level of ideology:

> "Ethnic hegemony involves ... a distinct set of strategies whereby a particular power elite lays claim to represent an ethnic majority in

such a way as to impose their own norms of language and culture on the rest of society as ideals or models to which all should aspire" (Cohen and Bains, 1988 p.26).

Hall analyses the resistance mounted by black people against this hegemony, identifying the specific struggle over the meanings and connotations of the very word 'black', a power struggle at the level of ideology "with a specificity and pertinence of its own - needing to be analysed in its own terms... It was 'real' because it was *real in its effects*... 'Black' could not be converted into 'black = beautiful' simply by wishing it were so. It had to become part of an organised practice of struggles requiring the building up of collective forms of black resistance as well as the development of new forms of black consciousness" (1985 p.48).

Much of the theoretical work on imperialism and racism has tended to interlink this with an understanding of class or gender oppression (for example, Alexander 1987; Miles 1989). Sometimes these separate modes of oppression acted so as to reinforce one another, but at other times they produced contradictions, for example between the interests of racism and of patriarchy in relation to the organisation of slavery:

"The slave system defined Black people as chattel. Since women, no less than men, were viewed as profitable labour-units, they might as well be genderless as far as the slave-holders were concerned... Judged by the evolving nineteenth century ideology of femininity, which emphasised women's roles as nurturing mothers and gentle companions and housekeepers for their husbands, Black women were practical anomalies" (Davis 1982 p.5).

Thus the material exploitation of black women as slave labour prevented their being subjugated *as women* to black men in terms of any ideology of femininity (and this potentially theatened to undermine the subjugation of all women in this way). However, white slave owners and their agents were still able to reassert their domination over their female slaves, both as women and as black people, through routine sexual as well as physical abuse and "the virtual institutionalisation of rape" (ibid. p.175).

Summary

Let us summarise the key elements of a critical understanding of power relations. Firstly, we have the differentiation between relations of 'power over', the systematic oppression and subordination of one social group by another, and those of 'power together', the basis of mutual support and resistance against oppression. This leads us to distinguish between, on the one hand, transactions of domination and subordination and, on the other, transactions of (mutual) recognition. Secondly, we have an analysis of power structures, in which the complex pattern of power inequalities within a given social formation is seen as the operation, through history, of (at least) three fundamental modes of oppression and resistance: the 'triple jeopardy' of patriarchy, imperialism and capitalism/feudalism. As we have seen, these structural relations may interlink in complex ways, sometimes compounding the oppression of specific groups and sometimes acting in contradiction to one another.

Power relations at different levels of transaction

In the previous section, I looked at how Althusser and Gramsci began to theorise ideological domination as a level of oppression and struggle in its own right: one that is separate from, but related to, the level of material exploitation. In this way, an analysis of the power relations of discourse starts to contextualise what, in bourgeois thought, had been separated off as subjective experience. An individual's capacity to think is no longer seen as free and autonomous, but as constructed and constrained within the prevailing political relations of discourse. However, as feminists in particular, have argued, feelings also have a political significance in their own right, and issues of emotional oppression require to be placed firmly on the agenda for analysis. Having embraced ideology as a crucial arena for struggle - hence the importance of consciousness raising groups - many women found that this was insufficient on its own to explain their experience of oppression at an emotional level:

> "We saw a clear link between our 'personal' feelings as women and the political structure we live in... But even in a growing movement active in the world, and with a radical restructuring of domestic life, our feelings and relationships did not change easily. Women were gaining new power but were continuing to feel depressed, inadequate and confused" (Ernst and Goodison 1981 p.3-4).

Although it has not been conventional to theorise emotional relations as a separate level of the social formation, they cannot easily be subsumed within the categories of material or ideological relations (although

there are obvious connections with processes taking place at these other levels). Therefore, emotionality requires to be understood as a third, separate (but related) level of social relations. The overlooking of this level of analysis within the bourgeois imperialist world-view may itself be seen as a reflection of power struggles in which white men have been able to construct a 'way of seeing' that privileges the value of certain levels of social relations over others:

> "In our dominant tradition [emotionality] has not been seen as an aid to understanding and action, but rather as an impediment, even an evil. We have a long tradition of trying to dispense with, or at least to control and neutralise, emotionality" (Baker Miller 1988 p.39).

Feminists working in the field of therapy have, in various ways, tried to integrate concepts of power in order to understand oppression at the level of emotional relations. As they have done so, it has become increasingly clear that the distortion of women's feelings and desires is not just a reflection of other material or ideological inequalities, but represents a distinct level of oppression and struggle in its own right. Baker Miller has suggested how emotionality is constructed differently within dominant and subordinate groups. She suggests that, in addition to using economic and physical force, and having ideological control over "culture" and "knowledge", the dominant group "does not encourage subordinates' full and free expression of their experience", and, in particular, their anger:

> "Any subordinate is in a position that constantly generates anger. Yet this is one of the emotions that no dominant group ever wants to

> allow in subordinates... It is ... made to appear that subordinates have no *cause* for anger; if they feel anything like it, there is something *wrong with them*" (1983 p.2).

At the level of emotional oppression, anger, as the feeling that motivates and enables subordinated groups to struggle against injustice, may be suppressed by some combination of external force and internalised prohibitions. Women have come to internalise such prohibitions against expressing anger within the emotional construction of 'femininity', thereby turning their anger in upon themselves so that it becomes manifested in depression, anxiety or self-harm. Just as Showalter (1987) has demonstrated how women's attempts at self-expression have come to be defined as 'madness' within Western patriarchy, so, for an Eastern woman, "the expression of aggression is ... more often turned inward against either herself or other women, because if it does appear overtly, it is deemed illegitimate by men, who have violent means to control transgressing women" (Brown et al 1981 p.135). However, such suppression of anger applies, not just to women's experience, but also to that of men who experience subordination:

> "Dominant-subordinate relationships among men have been based on class, race, religion or other factors. Therefore, the majority of men have lived in positions of subordination to other men. Whatever rightful anger men have had in relation to that subordination has had to be suppressed" (Baker Miller 1983 p.5).

Feminist insights such as these expose how oppressive power relations are not just to be found at the levels of economic and ideological

interaction, but also, just as crucially, at the level of emotionality. It may be argued that such processes of repressing and distorting feelings and desires are just as real an instance of oppressive power relations as anything that has been identified in terms of material exploitation. Therefore, it would seem to be helpful to theorise emotionality as a third level of the social formation with its own distinct power relations of oppression and resistance.

This analytical separation of the social formation into three distinct and semi-autonomous levels of social relations has its parallel in developments within the field of psychological therapy. As behaviourism, on its own, has come to be seen as an inadequate explanation of the complexity of human transactions, it has been supplemented first by an analysis of cognitive structures (for example, Beck 1976, Ellis 1970), and latterly by a rediscovery of the importance of emotionality (see Izard 1977). Such a three-way distinction between the cognitive, the affective and the behavioural - thinking, feeling and acting - also figures in recent developments in Transactional Analysis (see Kahler 1979), and this will be discussed in more detail later.

Thus we can begin to see the potential of such an analysis of levels of social relations in overcoming the old bourgeois dualism of "society" and "the individual". Each level describes a mode of analysis that is equally relevant whether it is applied to the structures of the social formation as a whole, as in Althusser's original conception, or to the interpersonal and intrapsychic transactions of individual people. The mode of material relations may be seen to define human activity, whether

it be economic production or consumption, domestic labour, leisure or interpersonal behaviour. Within an oppressive social formation, any activity from the exploitation of the wage labour of a Third World people, to the deliberate self harm committed by an individual woman may be seen to be structured, ultimately, by similar sets of power relations (and open to the same possibilities for emancipatory struggle). Similarly, as the women's movement has demonstrated with their slogan "the personal is political", struggles at the level of ideology and discourse are just as pertinent, whether they are at the scale of a mass political campaign or in the structures of individual thought and conversation. Finally, it may be seen that feelings are not purely an internal matter for each individual. They are structured by gender, by race and by class, and constitute a level of oppression, and of struggle, in their own right.

In this way, we may conceptualise the social formation as comprising distinct sets of ongoing power struggles, each taking place with their own particular momentum at a particular level of the social formation: emotionality, ideology and material relations. Such struggles may be seen to take place simultaneously at the scale of the social formation as a whole and at the scale of functioning of particular individuals, with individual change determining societal change and vice versa. At each level of the social formation we would need to distinguish the separate (but interlocking) interaction of forces of oppression and resistance in relation to struggles based on gender, race and class.

Power relations and social organisation

In this section, I will consider how, within a specific social formation, groups, sub-groups and other social institutions are organised on the basis of relations of 'power over' and 'power together'. Central to an analysis of how power relations structure social organisation are the various definitions of how the ruling group may itself be seen to be organised - as white people, as men, or as the feudal/capitalist class. Within the current international social formation, it is only those people who are white, male and capitalists in their own right who may be seen to be in a position to exercise *power over* all other groups, and thus it is they alone who must be seen as constituting the real ruling group. For example, the position of a bourgeois wife is ultimately precarious:

> "She herself does not own the means of production. Therefore her standard of living does not depend on her class relationship to the proletatiat; but on her serf relations of production with her husband" (Delphy 1984 pp.70-71).

Nevertheless, because the ruling group obscures itself behind this multiple definition, it is able to form useful alliances with specific group *fractions* (to modify Gramsci's term) who, while being ultimately subordinated to the ruling group, are able to excercise *power over* other groups. Black or female entrepreneurs form such group fractions, as does the white, male working class.

Under the conjunction of capitalism, imperialism and patriarchy, much social organisation is dictated by the principles of "hierarchical

ordering, with its imagery of winning and losing and the potential for violence which it contains" (Gilligan, 1982 p.32). The ideology of 'healthy competition' is the underlying legitimation for the exercise of 'power over' by the ruling group and its allied fractions:

> "At the core of the conception of 'man' ... in Western thought is a conception of will... Since the essence of each individual is his power to control ... conflict results as each individual seeks to control others. The resulting struggle is called competition, and competition is glorified as a desirable aspect of life" (Hodge et al 1975 pp.22,26).

In turn, this supposedly natural conflict between individuals is seen as requiring proper regulation, and it is this that comes to be seen as sufficient explanation of why "every Western society consists primarily of institutional hierarchies" (ibid. p.32). Such hierarchies situate white men in a 'pecking order' in relation to those to whose power they must defer and those whom they, in turn, have power over, thereby determining the organisation of men's personal and social identity. While feudal concepts of status according to birthright (aristocracy) have been replaced by the capitalist ideology of "free competition" (meritocracy), the fundamental principles of hierarchical ranking remain, ones which separate men out as individuals and set them apart from any real closeness with other men. By contrast, black men have been, for the most part, situated outside and beneath this ranking, collectively subjected to the power of white men:

> "How ... can it be argued that black male dominance exists in the same forms as white male dominance? Systems of slavery,

> colonialism, imperialism, have systematically denied position in the white male hierarchy to black men and have used specific forms of terror to oppress them" (Carby 1982 p.215).

Gilligan has noted how women will tend to develop their identity quite differently from white men in terms of the "web of relationships" to which they belong, an identity which may make it easier for them to organise informally in terms of 'power together', at least at the scale of close relationships. Reflecting on her own experience, Bell Hooks encountered the same spirit of relatedness among the black community as a whole within which she was brought up:

> "Discarding the notion that the self exists in opposition to the other ... we learned that the self existed in relation, was dependent for its being on the lives and experiences of everyone" (1989 pp.31-2).

However, within the dominant discourses of an imperialist patriarchal social formation, black people and women are denied access to positions from which to articulate and build on their experience of connectedness. They are instead invited to think and speak about themselves in distorted terms, ones that situate them only in relation to white men and not to each other. This can set them up in competition with one another (for example, in terms of their relative physical attractiveness - their beauty or the whiteness of their skin). Gilligan conceptualises this in terms of a power struggle between two radically different modes of social organisation, that based on "hierarchy" as against that based on a "web" of relatedness and mutual connection:

> "The reason women's experience has been so difficult to decipher or even discern is that ... the images of hierarchy and web ... convey different ways of structuring relationships... Each distorts the other's representation. As the top of the hierarchy becomes the edge of the web and as the centre of a network of connection becomes the middle of a hierarchical progression, each image marks as dangerous the place which the other defines as safe. Thus the images of hierarchy and web inform different modes of assertion and response: the wish to be alone at the top and the consequent fear that others will get too close; the wish to be at the centre of connection and the consequent fear of being too far out on the edge. These ... give rise to different portrayals of achievement and affiliation, leading to different modes of action" (1982 p.62).

From the perspective of imperialist oppression, the construction and differentiation of social groupings may be seen to have resulted from two principal (and often intersecting) processes: those of colonialism and those of racism. Under colonialism, a previously separate nation (which could be ethnically heterogeneous) would be placed under the political and economic hegemony of the imperial power, as a 'going concern' to be exploited as a unit in itself. By contrast, racism is s set of ideological and material practices by which a ruling group exerts domination, within the internal organisation of a social formation, by choosing to define itself, and its pattern of inheritance, in terms of its ethnic lineage. On the basis of this distinction, all people of this particular ethnic origin, irrespective of class position, become members of a dominant group, while those of different ethnic origins

become subordinated as 'other'. Such distictions are in no way 'natural', but arise at specific moments in history. For example, as Miles demonstrates, "The idea of 'race' emerged in the English language in the early sixteenth century and was used initially to explicate European history" (1989 p.31).

Within the Marxian tradition it is Gramsci and Althusser who have contributed most to the understanding of the complex organisation of the class structure within the capitalist social formation. Despite the international scale of exploitation under advanced capitalism, Gramsci identified each nation state as a unit that needed to be comprehended as an entity in its own right:

> "The internal relations of any nation are the result of a combination that is 'original' and (in a certain sense) unique; these relations must be understood and conceived in their originality and uniqueness..." (1971 p.239).

He saw the nation state as comprising a ruling class who were able to maintain overall control through a changing series of alliances with different class fractions who, in return for their support, were placed in positions of power over other groups, at least on a temporary basis. However, sometimes the interests of these various fractions and groups would be in opposition to those of the ruling class, and the ruling class would have to accommodate to them to some extent in order for their overall position of 'power over' to remain unchallenged.

By exploiting such contradictions within the organisation of the nation state, there could be significant scope for oppressed groups to organise

and achieve some 'power together', even if this fell short of a revolutionary take-over. He termed this complex and changing picture of oppressive alliances and empowering counter-alliances a "war of position", a struggle that was waged particularly in relation to gaining control over the various political institutions of the State:

> "The State is seen as the organ of one particular group, destined to create conditions for the latter's maximum expansion. But ... the dominant group is co-ordinated concretely with the general interests of the subordinate groups, and the life of the State is conceived of as a continuous process of formation and superseding of unstable equilibria ... between the interests of the fundamental group and those of subordinate groups - equilibria in which the interests of the dominant group prevail, but only up to a certain point" (ibid. p.182).

He also identified similar (and equally crucial) power struggles taking place in relation to the various institutions of "civil society", those that are outside direct State control, such as the Church, professional organisations, the media and the arts.

Althusser also differentiated between those institutions through which the ruling class could repress other groups directly via their political control of the State, and those "civil" institutions through which they could exert indirect domination, albeit in negotiation with the interests of certain subordinate class fractions (for example, professional groups). He termed the former category "Repressive State Apparatuses" (RSAs) and the latter "Ideological State Apparatuses" (ISAs). Both categories of institutions are characterised by internal

relations of 'power over' exercised by a controlling group over employees, consumers, pupils, prisoners or others placed under their influence. However, as Althusser argues, the latter category can also provide sites for organised resistance ('power together'):

> "The Ideological State Apparatuses may not only be the stake, but also the site of class struggle... The class (or class alliance) in power cannot lay down the law in ISAs as easily as it can in the (repressive) State apparatus ... because the resistance of the exploited classes is able to find means and occasions to express itself there, either by the utilisations of their contradictions, or by conquering combat positions in them in struggle" (1971 p.147).

Ferraro has identified how such institutions are also organised in a way that is crucial to patriarchal domination: it is men who typically comprise the controlling group within such institutions, although other men, as well as women, may be subordinated within them:

> "A basic premise of patriarchy is that males are uniquely qualified to conduct the business of civil society and to maintain order within the private realm. Patriarchal law, religion, philosophy and morality stress the superiority of males and their consequent responsibility and right to control society and the women and children in their own families... [However], under capitalist patriarchy, the opportunities to dominate are not equally distributed among men of different clases and races" (1988 p.127).

What emerges from this development of the Marxian tradition is an understanding of how relations of 'power over' and of 'power together'

come to shape the construction of two fundamentally different modes of social organisation. This parallels the analysis of patriarchy as a struggle between organisation based on masculine concepts of "hierarchy" and "autonomy", as against that based on feminine concepts of "web" and "relatedness". On the one hand, we have institutions (that may or may not be part of the political apparatus of the State) comprising people in positions of structural power over one another, through which dominant groups seek to maintain and enhance their power over subordinated groups. On the other, we have peer organisations who may work together to empower their members by increasing the opportunities available to them (and reduce the degree to which dominant groups may exercise power over them). Examples of these include trade unions, women's groups and black cultural organistions. Feminist theory and practice has concentrated on opportunities for achieving 'power together' at the scale of personal relationships and within the family itself. The political success of the women's movement in achieving structural changes at the scale of the social formation demonstrates that changes occurring at small scales of organisation can have an impact on the major apparatuses of state and civil society.

In the light of this, any social organisation may be understood in relation to the way in which it reflects a particular moment in a struggle, either in the internal power inequalities of an institution, or in relation to processes of mutual support and empowerment within a group that is beginning to organise separately in order to contest its oppression. Some organisations (including, as we shall see later, the family) may emerge being defined by both sorts of power relations.

4: DECONSTRUCTING THE INDIVIDUAL

In this chapter, I will look at the various perspectives that begin to penetrate beneath the image of the free autonomous 'individual' that is central to the bourgeois understanding of the person. In doing so we begin to see both the range of conflicting elements that co-exist within a 'personality' and the processes by which some appearance of unity and coherence is maintained. In this way, we can move beyond the bourgeois dualism of subject and object in our understanding of human relations, and hence refine our definitions of power relations. As we shall see in Chapter 7, these perspectives will prove particularly useful in developing a critical understanding of 'the family' as a unit.

The Concept of Subjectivity

Discourse theory has studied the operation of language itself as a basis for a critical theory of ideology. Broadly speaking, it has inverted the bourgeois understanding of the relationship between speaker and language: instead of a speaker being seen as free to think and express her/himself in language however s/he wishes, the available structure of language is seen as determining what can and cannot be thought or spoken - in short, locating the subject position(s) that may be taken by the speaker. A discourse may comprise, not just the operation of language itself, but any sets of practices that signify certain meanings, and any structures of beliefs, 'knowledges' and 'common-sense' that dictate what can be said (or done) and by whom, within specific contexts of social

interaction. More detailed analyses, such as those undertaken by Foucault, have shown how discourses set up, not a single, unified subject position, but a range of alternative and possibly conflicting positions, and that a single individual may be called to occupy more than one of these at different times. Furthermore, a person may have to participate in a variety of (conflicting) discourses (e.g. those at home as against those at work). Nevertheless, despite such determination by a range of already existing discursive structures, the speaker still lives the illusion that s/he is fully in control of what s/he is saying:

> "Language, in the form of an historically specific range of ways of giving meaning to social reality offers us various discursive positions ... through which we can live our lives... In taking on a subject position, the individual assumes that she is the author of the ideology or discourse which she is speaking. She speaks or thinks it as if she were in control of meaning. She 'imagines' that she is indeed the type of subject that humanism proposes - rational, unified, the source rather than the effect of language" (Weedon 1987 pp.25-6,31).

By constructing an analysis in this way, discourse theory has been able to penetrate beneath the myth of the free, autonomous and self-directing individual, a concept of the 'subject' that lies at the heart of Western bourgeois thought and ideological practice. This concept is enshrined in Descartes' dictum "I think, therefore I am" and situates "the individual ... with regard to law, to contractual obligations and to property" (Henriques et al 1984 p.133). Such a concept of the subject, generated as it was in specific historical discourses, has become

hegemonic and incorporated into 'common sense'. However, this subject is specifically male, Western and belonging to the bourgeois class:

> "The 'normal' subject is regarded as unproblematic, that is, it is what can be taken for granted and, indeed, can be construed as the model that fixes the norms. Ideally, the model is the male European rational individual: both homo rationalis and homo economicus... The poor, the 'criminal', the mad, the non-European and women are, almost by definition, abnormal, deviant" (Venn 1984 p.130).

In reality, the term 'subject' has a dialectical meaning. As in the statement "I am a British subject", being a subject implies that one is constructed within a specific ideological framework (e.g. the legal and customary definitions of citizenship), while, at the same time, appearing to act freely and accepting full responsibility for one's actions. When this 'normal' subject is deconstructed, what emerges is a picture of struggle and conflict being acted out at the scale of the person, a conflict that is dictated by the context into which the person has been inserted. 'The person' may thus be seen as the site of a dialectical interplay between external determination and internal desire, and between personal history and present circumstances.

Discourse theory provides a theoretical bridge that can at last transcend the analytical separation of the world of subjective experience from that of objective things-in-themselves, of the 'individual' from 'society'. It is a theory that seeks to understand the organisation of the person, as well as that of the social formation, in terms of power relations. It comprises a synthesis of elements drawn

from Marxism, structural linguistics and psychoanalysis. It starts with a critique of Marx that suggests that he underestimated the relative importance and separateness of power relations at the level of ideology with respect to those of the economic base. The focus shifts to how language itself is constructed and used to maintain and enhance the power of the ruling group over subordinated groups. From structural linguistics came the insight that language is not simply a neutral medium that reflects and takes its meaning from reality, but is a code in which meanings are constructed in relation to an established set of already existing meanings and associations (see de Saussure, 1974). Thus, the 'establishment' is in a position to fix the points of reference of the current language (and other discursive structures) and thereby to dictate that certain things can be spoken and others not, and to impose particular slants and meanings on to perceived reality.

However, just as Marx could be criticised for his narrow "economism", discourse theory has, in turn, tended to over-emphasise transactions at the level of ideology in relation to other levels of the social formation. At its most extreme it has produced the position that the relations of the material world have no existence except in as much as they are represented in language (see, for example, Hindess and Hirst, 1975). Meanings are seen as only having meaning in relation to, and difference from, other meanings. Such a position harks back to the one-sided abstraction of the humanist conception of "pure thought" and runs counter to the current formulation which gives equal weight to material, ideological and emotional relations.

Any discourse may be the site of a political struggle. Discourses construct certain ways of seeing as right and others as wrong, vest authority in the hands of 'experts' and force certain groups to take on subject positions of subordination if they are to participate at all in social interaction. However, oppressed groups may struggle to 'reverse' the terms of the established discourse, and restructure the nature of their subject positions. Foucault studied the medical, legal and literary discourses that took place in the nineteenth century concerning homosexuality. While, on the one hand, gay people were repressed by being placed into various categories of "perversity", this "also made possible the formation of a 'reverse' discourse: homosexuality began to speak on its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturality' be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified" (1981 p.101).

Just as each discourse is a site of struggle, so is each subject position. At its most basic, it is the struggle between what is expected of a speaker in that position and what of her/himself the speaker seeks to insert into it. In the example above, gay people were inserted into precise and named subject positions with the strong expectation that they take on subordinate status. However, to a greater or lesser degree, they were able to use these positions to express their desire publically in ways that had not been possible before. Nevertheless, the fact that they were still struggling, using the subject positions made available to them by the professional 'experts', precluded them from expressing themselves entirely *in their own terms*. What is emerging is a picture of the 'individual', not as a consistent

unity, but as the ensemble of subject positions to which the person has access, each one of which is a site of struggle and may be in contradiction to other subject positions.

Althusser showed that, within capitalist discourse, a person is only recognised as if s/he were the free agent and autonomous subject of bourgeois thought. S/he is hailed from (or "interpellated" in) this position as 'subject', and it is from this position that s/he must transact if s/he is to be heard at all within everyday discourses. All our apparent self-awareness and initiative can only take place within the subject positions that are made available to us in ideology:

> "All ideology has the function (which defines it) of 'constituting' concrete individuals as subjects... The individual is interpellated as a (free) subject ... in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection, i.e. in order that he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjection 'all by himself'" (1971 pp.171,182).

Under the economic relations of capitalism, people are invited to construct themselves as if they were free agents who choose to sell their labour power to the capitalists: "the (imaginary) relationship of individuals to the relations of production" (ibid. p.165).

Althusser makes the complex but fundamental point about the 'dual' character of ideology: it is simultaneously both imaginary and real. It is imaginary in the sense that it distorts and misrepresents the real relationship of individuals to the material relations of their existence. Workers, who have no control over the means of production, are in reality forced to accept a job on the terms that they will be

paid a wage based on their subsistence needs, rather than one that reflects the true value of the work done (and hence provide profit for the capitalist). However, in ideology, this is constructed as an exchange between individuals of 'a fair day's work for a fair day's pay'. This ideological relationship becomes real in the sense that it is lived *as if it were real* by the participants. When going after work, workers are situated, and must actively situate themselves, as free subjects who actually want to work, and who can therefore be held individually responsible for the quality and execution of that work. Ideology thus becomes enshrined in real customs, institutions and practices.

The process whereby these conflicting elements are held together is the fundamental core of any ideological framework. Under capitalist ideology, there is an imperative on people to cover over their experience of internal contradiction, and instead to construct themselves at all times with an appearance of unity, consistency and responsibility. It is this that gives them their necessary coherence to be "understood" and to be able to participate within social interaction:

> "The subject in ideology has a consistency which rests on an imaginary identification of self: this is simultaneously a recognition (since it provides subject-ivity, enables the subject to act), and a misrecognition (a recognition ... in relation to ... ideology). The consistent subject is the place to which the representations of ideology are directed: Duty, Morality, and Law all depend on this category of subject for their functioning, and all contribute as institutions to its production. The individual

> thus lives his subject-ion to social structures as a consistent subject-ivity... The individual produces himself in this imaginary wholeness, this imaginary reflection of himself as the author of his actions" (Coward and Ellis 1977 p.76).

Although the terminology used by various workers in this field can be confusing, I shall use the term "subjectivity" to denote the organisation of an individual's whole personality: the complete ensemble of their (often conflicting) subject positions, the collective organisation of the various "sites" and "statuses" available to them in interacting with others that must be lived as if they constituted a single unitary subject. The specific modes of repression within the organisation of personal subjectivity - the systematic exclusion of a person from certain subject positions due to their gender, sexual orientation, race or class - may be seen to reflect the oppressive organisation of the social formation into which the person is interpellated. Nevertheless, as Weedon argues, the construction of subjectivity is also a site for political struggle:

> "The political significance of decentring the subject and abandoning the belief in essential subjectivity is that it opens up subjectivity to change... Social relations, which are always relations of power and powerlessness between different subject positions, will determine the range of forms open to any individual on the basis of gender, race, class, age and cultural background. Where other positions exist but are exclusive to a particular class, race or gender, the excluded individual will have to fight for access by transforming existing power relations" (1987 pp.33,95).

Within discourse theory, subjectivity is only conceptualised in relation to transacting within ideology. In line with the framework outlined earlier, I will broaden this out to embrace transactions at the levels of both material and emotional relations. Within the capitalist labour process, a worker must construct her/himself as an autonomous, consistent subject who can (freely) sell her/his labour power and be held responsible for the quality of the work done. Under patriarchy, the expression of raw and conflicting emotions is seen as a sign of weakness, "hysteria" or even madness. Instead, men and women must construct themselves as consistent subjects who display certain emotions and not others: men must typically appear aggressive, strong or impassive, while women must appear open, caring and empathic.

It is instructive to see how a person's sense of self may be determined by the modes of transaction into which s/he is customarily inserted. Those situated in positions of domination over others (for example, ruling class men) must organise their subjectivity in a way that is fundamentally paranoid - as a self-in-isolation (a construction that most closely resembles the illusory bourgeois subject). They are in the privileged position of being able to define their own subjectivity, but only as long as they are able to exert rigid control, both, externally, over the subjectivities of their subordinates, and, internally, over the more vulnerable aspects of their own desires. Those frequently situated in positions of subordination have little opportunity to have any sense of being in control of their subjectivity at all - its parameters are largely constructed for them by powerful others within transactions to which they have little choice but to submit. For them, any sense of

self may largely be replaced by a sense of duty and necessity, rather than anything approaching a bourgeois sense of 'individuality'. However, if such people are also situated within some significant transactions of mutuality, recognition or closeness, then they may experience some sense of themselves, not as a self-in-isolation, but as a self-in-relation to others - a sense of self that is particularly typical for women and black people (see Hooks 1989; Surrey 1985).

The construction of personal subjectivity may be seen inevitably to involve a process of negotiation (and hence some degree of distortion). Certain thoughts, feelings or potential actions must be repressed entirely (even from the person's own conscious awareness) if s/he is to remain coherent and participate within the current social formation. These are not permitted to emerge at all above a person's 'transactional horizon'. The other thoughts, feelings and actions which are allowed to emerge, do so only in a form that is mediated (to some degree) by the dictates of the specific contexts and subject positions into which the person is inserted and inserts her/himself. It is in relation to analysing these processes of repression and displacement that discourse theory turns to various traditions within psychoanalysis, particularly the work of Jacques Lacan. From these frameworks for understanding psychic development there emerges a picture of how an infant may be inserted into an already existing array of subject positions, resulting in a significant determination of its desire. Rather than seeing this as an 'essential' desire becoming distorted by the dictates of 'civilisation', we may conceptualise this as the infant continually negotiating its desire within a context of social power relations.

Integration of psychoanalytic perspectives

Despite working firmly within a bourgeois tradition that took as 'natural' the historically specific social relations of his time, Freud was the first person to theorise the inherently split nature of the 'individual'. As Althusser argues, this insight contains the potential for a breakthrough in dismantling the illusory consistency of the subject in bourgeois ideology, exposing underlying structures of conflict and misrecognition:

> "Freud has discovered for us that the real subject, the individual in his unique essence, has not the form of an ego, centred on ... 'consciousness' ... [but] that the human subject is de-centred, constituted by a structure that has no 'centre' either, except ... in the ideological formations in which it recognises itself" (1971 pp.218-9).

Arising out of Freud's work, various psychoanalytic traditions have sought to theorise such processes of internal conflict and splitting in different ways. Each of these approaches may be of potential value in understanding how personal subjectivity is constructed within a specific social formation, a process which may be seen to take place primarily within the institution of the family. Jacques Lacan (1977) has focused on the process whereby the infant has to submit to the power of the father by repressing significant elements of its desiring, thereby splitting its psyche into the separate organisations of 'conscious' and 'unconscious' - a process of repression that is closely linked to the infant's entry into the structure of language. Transactional Analysis

has developed further Freud's conceptualisation of the psyche as comprising autonomous and potentially conflicting functional organisations: the id (the ensemble of instinctual impulses), the ego (the location of rationality and decision making) and the super-ego (the introjection of parental and societal authority). Finally, the object-relations theorists, such as Melanie Klein (1955), Ronald Fairbairn (1952) and D. W. Winnicott (1965), have concentrated on the way in which an infant conceptualises and enters into relationships with significant others, tending to split off painful feelings, and ultimately to construct the other as two separate "objects", one "good", the other "bad". Although all of these approaches are firmly rooted within the tradition of bourgeois humanism, they nevertheless each cast doubt on the unitary character of the bourgeois subject.

The women's therapy movement has sought to rewrite the psychoanalytic account of infant development from the point of view of women's experience. This has involved attempts to contextualise some of the universal and naturalist assumptions of conventional psychoanalysis, in particular with regard to the construction of female and male identities. Such a reworking of psychoanalysis could provide a basis for a critical theory of emotional relations, one that places at the centre of analysis the class, race and gender specificity of particular constructions of emotionality. Whereas the original Freudian problematic was dualistic (opposing intrinsic 'biological' drive against 'civilised' values), this opens up the possibility of a dialectical analysis that exposes the operation of 'power over' and 'power together' in the construction of emotional relationships. In this way, we could

move beyond the inherent conservatism of conventional psychoanalysis - repression as unfortunate but necessary for "civilisation" - to examine the specific supressions and distortions of emotionality that are imposed by participation in a particular social formation. In turn, this raises the possibility of individual and collective struggle to achieve a less oppressive organisation of personal subjectivity.

Lacan, following Freud, starts with some notion of raw emotionality as the internal source of 'energy' in transacting with the external world. Whereas Freud postulated a sexual or erotic instinctual drive, Lacan situates emotionality within the sphere of *social* relations. He uses the wider term "desire" to connote a wish to connect to and be recognised by the "Other" (in the first instance, the primary caregiver, who will tend, in a Western patriarchal social formation, to be the mother). He suggests that an infant gradually becomes aware, during the period 6 to 18 months, that its sense of what it wants does not always correspond to what is provided by the Other. However, prior to the infant's entry into discourse (when it first uses language), it cannot conceptualise the difference between self and other, and hence cannot distinguish its own desire *for* the Other from its wish to be desired *by* the Other, to be the (sole) object of the Other's desire (see Turkle, 1979). Thus, whenever it finds itself ill-treated, or even that the Other is momentarily too busy to attend to it, it experiences a catastrophic denial of its desire, a loss which it cannot yet conceptualise. Its sense of wholeness and connectedness to the Other is profoundly shattered.

Object-relations theory proposes an internal mechanism by which the pre-verbal infant deals with its experience of relative powerlessness - its inability to make the Other respond to its desire and its neediness at all times (an Other that it cannot yet conceptualise as a separate being). Powerless to prevent this 'rejection', it can nevertheless reassert some control over its experience by restructuring it within a pre-verbal fantasy world. In this it splits its desire into two separate ensembles of feelings, one directed towards an imaginary representation of that part of the Other that *does* respond to its needs and seems to be under its control (the "good" mother-object) and the second directed towards that part which it experiences as rejecting or denying (the "bad" mother-object):

> "The embryonic psyche ... transfers the difficult situation to the world of inner reality, where it can exercise more control... The unsatisfying experiences that occur in relation to mother then find their expressions of her in the infants inner world. Mother becomes a disappointing person who has to be split in two: the known and longed-for giving mother and the known and deeply disappointing mother" (Eichenbaum and Orbach 1985 p.18).

Unable, as yet, to conceptualise the Other as a subject in her (his) own right, the infant invests "good" feelings in relation to one imaginary Other-object and "bad" feelings in relation to a second Other-object. Thus, before the infant is able to conceptualise its 'self' in any way , a real split may be seen to be emerging in how it organises its experience at an emotional level.

Where Eichenbaum and Orbach differ from the conventional account of object-relations is in their understanding of the socially constructed nature of the Mother-object that is internalised:

> "We acknowledge that mother is not an object, mother is a person, a social and psychological being. From this perspective, what becomes internalised is ... the different aspects of mother. What the object relations theorists have failed to take into account is the psychology of the mother and the effect of the social position of women on the mother's psychology" (ibid. p.34).

If we accept the object-relations account, we can see how, within a social formation that constructs women as the primary caregiver, children of both sexes will, in turn, be constructed with a tendency to represent women as objects that are either idealised caregivers or are rejecting, evil and dangerous. The implications of this, in terms of the gendering of personal subjectivity, will be discussed later on.

For Lacan, the crucial process of splitting takes place a little later, at the point at which the infant begins to think and talk, using the structures of language and discourse within which it finds itself. Sharing Freud's bourgeois pessimism, Lacan sees the shattering of the illusion of connectedness as an inevitable part of the infant's development, irrespective of the culture and ideology within which the child is growing up. However, if a more critical perspective is employed, this all-or-nothing position may be deconstructed. In this way, the degree to which (and the way in which) it is shattered may be seen to depend on the specific responses that the infant receives from the Other (or others): the degree to which they are receptive to its

desiring and are able to communicate their desire to the infant, or, on the contrary, the degree to which they use their position of relative power to abuse or distort the infant's desire. This, in turn, may be seen to depend on the specific constructions of mothering, fathering, and other aspects of family organisation within a particular social formation, and on the specific life experiences of the people who come to occupy these positions. For example, it would seem that the more the infant has to rely on a single Other (typically the mother under patriarchal capitalism), the more vulnerable it is to a sense of catastrophic rejection, being dependent on the specific responses of just one person. Similarly, people's experience of past and present oppression will influence whether or not they may be too harrassed to have time for the infant, whether they are too depressed to be able to respond to its feelings, or whether they use their position of relative power to abuse the infant (perhaps having been abused themselves).

In considering the extent to which an infant's desire is systematically abused within the current social formation, it is useful to refer to the work of Alice Miller. Also working from a psychoanalytic perspective, she argues that Freud (and, by implication, Lacan) have suppressed what their patients were trying to tell them about the specific ways in which, as infants, they were abused by their parents. By postulating "infantile sexuality" or "desire" as drives whose satisfaction is, by definition, impossible or inappropriate, responsibility for the subsequent repression or distortion of desire is thereby located with the infant her/himself, a "way of thinking that overlooks the actual imbalance of power" (1985 p.124). She suggests that child-rearing

practices actively maintain a ruthless and unnecessary oppression of the infant's desire (conventionally seen as "wilfulness"), by means of varying degrees of sexual, physical and emotional abuse, and that this is accompanied by a refusal even to allow expression of the immense anger that this generates in the infant:

> "The former practice of physically maiming, exploiting and abusing children seems to have been gradually replaced by a form of mental cruelty that is masked by the honourific term *child-rearing*. Since training in many cultures begins in infancy during the initial symbiotic relationship between mother and child, this early conditioning makes it virtually impossible for the child to discover what is actually happening to him... The greatest cruelty that can be inflicted on children is to refuse to let them express their anger and suffering except at the risk of losing their parents' love and affection" (1983 pp.4,106).

Central to Lacan's schema is the process whereby the infant is driven to construct itself as a subject in discourse, able to think and communicate using symbolic languages (and hence becoming a direct participant in ideology). He argues that it is in order to be able to name, and hence perhaps to deal with its "lack" of connection, that the infant is impelled to enter into the symbolic world of discourse, the domain of power in which it perceives the desire of the Other to be expressed and controlled. As part of the same relation that allows the infant to signify and comprehend experience, the infant itself is constituted as a subject by the discourse (and thereby takes on a position in relation to an already existing ideological framework).

Once it enters into this system, it is able to call upon already existing significations of itself and others. Speaking as 'I', the infant moves into a subject position that was already prepared for it even before it was born, one that is situated not only in relation to a supposedly universal "Symbolic Order", but also in relation to specific (familial) discourses:

> "Symbols in fact envelop the life of man in a network so total that they join together, before he comes into the world, those who are going to engender him 'by flesh and blood'; so total that they bring to his birth ... the shape of his destiny; so total that they give the words that will make him faithful or renegade... [The infant enters into] a discourse in ... which his place is already inscribed at birth, if only by virtue of his proper name" (1977 pp.68,148).

From a more critical perspective, we may suggest that the infant, in accepting its name as its opportunity to think and speak within the domain of ideology, also takes on a specific set of attributions to do with its gender, race, class position, and many other matters. In relation to gender, it may be observed that:

> "As babies move towards their psychological birth as separate persons, they learn that people fall into two categories: female amd male... At 18 months they can recognise themselves as either male or female" (Eichenbaum and Orbach 1985 p.22)

Similarly, as the research of Semaj (1980) has shown, a black child can display an understanding of its racial position from the age of 2½ onwards.

Eichenbaum and Orbach suggest that it is the structural difference in the positions of 'mother' and 'father' within the present patriarchal family structure that construct the emotional meaning of 'male' and 'female' for the girl or boy, in particular the man's status as a remote and powerful outsider:

> "During the first two years of life ... father is strikingly absent... When father enters ... he represents and is in his presence someone from outside... For the baby boy, father is 'other' than mother and like him. The boy identifies with father and uses him to separate himself further from mother... For the little girl, father is 'other'" (1985 pp.10,21).

It is by imitating the separation and autonomy of his father's position, that the boy can hope, in turn, to take on a position of power over women's desire (a sense of power that he may already have experienced in the special way that his mother may have treated him as 'other'). For the girl, there is no such access to positions of patriarchal power for herself. Her power can only come vicariously through her being perceived as attractive by the source of this power - her father.

According to Lacan, the fundamental symbol which the infant requires, in order to make sense of its situation, is one that describes the authority that is seen to control the desire of the mother; the power that makes her (at times) unavailable to the infant:

> "The child does not find himself of herself alone in front of the mother... The Phallus forbids the child the satisfaction of his or her own desire, which is the desire to be the exclusive desire of the mother" (1957 p.14).

Although Lacan sees this symbol as relating to a universal societal authority, the fact that he calls it "The Name of the Father" or "The Phallus", provides us with a signification that may be seen to denote a domination of the desire of both the mother and the infant that is specifically patriarchal. As Hirst and Woolley point out, due to its widespread legitimation and its unconscious internalisation by women, this is "a symbol exceeding the 'real' father, who may be a weakling, absent or dead" (1985 p.10). Feminist readings of Lacan suggest that this symbol of patriarchal authority is so generally available within ideology that it presents itself as a "signifier for the absence of the mother irrespective of the actual existence or intrusion of an actual man/father" (Mitchell and Rose 1982 p.39).

Lacan's perspective focuses on what the infant has to lose as it takes its place in the world of discourse. In order to fit in to its pre-existing slot, the infant has to repress some (or, in Lacan's account, all) of its own desiring. It is this desire that cannot be articulated that comes to form the person's unconscious. Thus, by the same process by which the child constructs her/himself as a (unified) subject in discourse, s/he also splits her/his subjectivity at the level of emotionality: "it is the subject who introduces division into the individual" (Lacan 1977 p.80). The child comes to organise her/himself in relation to a desire that is not so much an expression of her/his own feelings and needs, as a reflection of patriarchal 'power over'. If, following Henriques et al, we "replace Lacan's emphasis on a universal and timeless symbolic order with an emphasis on discursive relations, viewed in their historical specificity", we may arrive at a more complex

picture in which we can see how, for women and men, black people and white people, working class and ruling class people, specific elements of their desire may be repressed or distorted by their participation in this social formation, as "particular discourses set parameters through which desire is produced, regulated and channelled" (1984 pp.217,220).

Althusser, in his reading of Lacan, stresses the importance of the construction of subjectivity within historically specific forms of familial ideology, ones that are crucially determined by the capitalist mode of production. He uses the term "imaginary" to connote, not Lacan's idealisation of wholeness and connectedness between the desire of mother and child, but the reverse of this: its distortion into the illusory separation and individuality that is imposed on the infant as soon as s/he becomes a subject in capitalist discourse, expected to be consistent and held to be responsible for her/his own thoughts and actions. According to Althusser, it is at this point, the infant's point of entry into the already existing familial ideology, that it is led to misrecognise itself in the apparent unity of "the sexual subject (boy or girl) which it already is in advance" (1971 p.176). Thus instead of the "imaginary" being an image of paradise lost, it becomes a political issue of the "necessarily imaginary distortion" of an infant's subjectivity so that s/he may be constructed as a potential economic subject of capitalist production, freely willing to sell her/his labour power as a separate individual.

While a Lacanian perspective offers an understanding of the socially constructed nature of the symbol of 'father' or 'man' that a child

internalises, it is the object-relations perspective that enables us to deconstruct the internalisations of 'mother' or 'woman'. As long as a woman is constructed within patriarchal social relations as the primary caregiver, children will enter the world of discourse with a split and ambivalent set of feelings towards what is represented by 'mother' - and hence what is represented by 'female' - that are derived from their pre-verbal splitting of feelings on to "good" and "bad" objects (see Dinnerstein 1976). Within patriarchal discourse, symbols for such a split objectification of women are readily available - for example, 'good fairy'/'witch' or 'madonna'/'whore' (see Welldon 1988). Thus, for girls and boys, the significations that are available to them about their gender - and what they will grow up to be - relate to such fundamental significations as 'The Phallus', or 'The Good Fairy'.

Let us look first at the construction of male subjectivity under Western bourgeois patriarchy. A boy will typically have experience of being oppressed by his actual father (or male power in general). He is also debarred from sharing his intimate feelings about this - whether they be those of vulnerability or of anger - with his father or other men. Instead, as Baker Miller argues, he is expected to adopt patterned forms of 'phallic' aggression and competition in order to "be like a man":

> "The young boy, following the pattern of the larger society, is not permitted to express his anger directly and immediately, especially to the father... At the same time, however, the boy is stimulated and encouraged to be 'aggressive' - that is to act aggressively. Boys are made to fear *not being aggressive*, lest they be found wanting, be beaten by another, or (worst of all) be like a girl.

> All of these constitute ... a core part of what is *made to be* men's sense of identity - which has been called masculinity (1983 p.5).

This anger towards men which cannot be expressed directly must seek its outlet elsewhere. McLeod and Saraga suggest that the intense "rage" that underlies male violence towards women and children is actually a displacement of men's feelings of injury and hurt at their abuse by other men:

> "The source of sexual violence ... should be seen as rage at men, at the father, at the self, that is displaced onto and acted out against women and children, and instead of perceiving other men as threatening, which is terrifying and unacceptable, the threat is perceived in women where it can be controlled" (1988 p.42).

The boy enters into discourse with the realisation that he is prevented from getting too close to his mother because her desire is ultimately placed under the control of 'phallic' male power relationships (irrespective of whether she is currently in a relationship with a specific man). He is thus placed in a contradiction at the level of emotional relations. In order to enter into emotional relationships with women (including his mother), he must construct himself as a recognisable emotional subject within a discourse whose terms (for both men and women) are dictated by the signifying power of "The Phallus". He finds himself in competition with other men and can only participate if he too constructs himself with the required 'phallic' subjectivity, repressing his own more intimate feelings and equating desire with the emotional domination and possession of women:

> "Masculine sexual identity is established through feeling superior to women we are close to... It is as if we only know how to feel good ourselves if we put others down" (Seidler 1985 p.169).

Thus, paradoxically, a boy's quest for a relationship, within the terms of the current social order, actually renders him incoherent at expressing himself directly at an emotional level. His desire for connection forces him to construct himself as a 'phallic' subject and thereby deny himself the possibility of achieving any real intimacy. While his masculine subjectivity will construct him as 'different' and 'desirable' to women (who are themselves constructed in relation to phallic emotionality), he is only able, in practice, to switch between an invitation to perpetual mothering (as an emotionally incoherent 'little boy') and a position of sexual domination (as a phallic 'man'). Neither offers the possibility of real emotional connection or any open expression of vulnerability. This leads to a peculiar sexualisation of men's attempts at emotional intimacy, one which, in turn, carries the potentiality for violence and abuse:

> "Sex is one of the few socially acceptable ways in which men can aspire to closeness with others, and as such it becomes the carrier of all the unexpressed desires that men's emotional illiteracy produces. However, this same power of sex to produce emotionality makes it dangerous to men whose identity is based on the rejection of emotion; sex then becomes split off, limited to the activity of the penis, an act rather than an encounter... Sexual abuse is *inherent* in a mode of personality organisation that rejects intimacy" (Glaser and Frosh 1988 p.24).

Such a distorted subjectivity is not truly interactive. It is the corollary, at an emotional level, of the autonomous 'free' subject of bourgeois thought. Its appearance of self-directed activity is achieved only at the expense of any receptivity to the desire of others, or any possibility of emotional inter-dependence. A male subjectivity which operates only as an active subject, demands, as its complement, a female subjectivity that is purely receptive and reactive - as the perpetual object of male desire. Such objectification is achieved through the signification of women in relation to icons such as the "Virgin Mary" or "Florence Nightingale", while any signs of independent desiring are subsumed within the alternative significations of "Witch" or "Whore". For men, these significations provide a structuring of emotional subjectivity which reproduces the specific relations of patriarchal domination: the perpetual expectation of emotional care and sexual 'satisfaction' from women (women as "good" objects), coupled with the misanthropic rejection (fear) of any emotional demands made by women (women as "bad" objects). As Reimers and Dimmock argue:

> "Women are consumed as an image, presented in a way that divorces them from their humanity. We grow both to want and to hate these images, because ultimately they cannot satisfy the real needs of being human. For some men, these fantasies of power and sex are acted out in reality. Our tyranny over women, sexually and violently, is a result of a desire to dominate, to express some form of power where no real human experience exists" (1990 p.169).

For a girl, the construction of emotional subjectivity is very different. By her gender, she is denied the possibility of ever

constructing herself as an active 'phallic' subject (although this means that she has no need to distance herself from her feelings in this way). She will never be the subject of her mother's desire - although, typically, this will be her closest relationship. Instead she faces the terrifying prospect of having to take on for herself the split objectification - as "Good Fairy" or "Wicked Witch" - which she has already experienced in the organisation of her feelings towards her mother. This provides her with the model of how she must construct herself in order to become a woman within this social formation. Her only option is to construct herself as the object of male 'phallic' desire. As Eichenbaum and Orbach argue, women are thereby forced to participate in the construction of their own powerlessness:

> "The first psychological demand that flows from a woman's social role is that she must *defer* to others - follow their lead, articulate her needs only in relation to theirs. In essence, she is not the main actor in her own life... *Women come to hide their desires from themselves*" (1985 pp.7-8).

Each of the significations of self that are available to a woman deny her the possibility of being an active subject, of demanding that her desires are responded to and her vulnerability cared for (particularly by men). As a "Witch", her active desires and "bad" feelings (such as anger) will be punished and rejected, and as a "Good Fairy", she may only express "good" feelings on behalf of and for the benefit of others. Whereas male subjectivity gives men the right to ask and demand, but denies them the ability to articulate what they actually feel or desire, female subjectivity places women in the reverse paradox: they retain

greater facility in expressing feelings and desires, but primarily as a way of looking after others. Thus, in constructing her feminine subjectivity in subjugation to 'phallic' desire, a women must not only discount her own desire, but also, in an intuitive way, use her facility with feelings to discern and respond to the unarticulated wants and needs of men. As a "Good Fairy", a woman has to be able to look after a man, without his even having to make himself vulnerable by admitting to his more intimate feelings. Underlying the paradoxical distortion of desire for both men and women is a straightforward power relationship: while men may be incoherent at expressing emotionality, this incoherence neatly conceals their vulnerability and forces women to do their emotional 'work' for them. This emotional exploitation closely parallels women's exploitation in relation to domestic labour.

On entering the patriarchal discourses of family life, a boy is immediately set up in competition with other men, and is thereby excluded from the possibility of experiencing emotional closeness with them. The position is more complex for women. Within the romantic ideology of bourgeois family life, girls are brought up to expect that they will achieve emotional closeness to a man, if they manage to construct themselves sufficiently well as an object of male 'phallic' desire. Just as men are constructed in competition with one another, so women must construct themselves to compete for male attention. This aspect of the construction of female subjectivity clearly undermines the possibility of emotional closeness between women.

However, a girl also constructs her subjectivity within the context of the mother-daughter relationship. As this relationship is located within the domestic sphere and takes place with little reference to men, its construction may be partly outside the direct influence of both capitalism and patriarchy. Bourgeois concepts of individuality and competition are peripheral rather than central to the way in which a girl comes to experience herself in relation to her mother. There is no process which forces them to conceptualise themselves as emotionally separate or different from one another. On the one hand, this lack of differentiation means that a girl (unlike a boy) is not constructed as 'desirable' to her mother. On the other hand, this means that there is little barrier to picking up on each other's feelings. However, since the subjectivities of both mother and daughter are constructed in relation to their signification as women as "Good"/"Bad" objects, it is difficult for either party to express their feelings directly (and actively) towards the other - to ask outright for what they want. If they construct themselves as "Good", they are debarred from making demands. If one does make a demand, she is in danger of being constructed as "Bad" and risks being rejected and punished by the other. However, as intuition has come to form such a crucial part of the construction of their 'femininity', they will often be able to respond to and look after the other without even being asked. It is in this somewhat indirect manner that women are able to achieve a real degree of 'power together' at the level of emotional support - something that the construction of masculinity makes particularly difficult for men.

Although much work has concentrated on the reciprocal distortions of emotional subjectivity that are produced in men and women through the operation of patriarchy, parallel processes may be seen to take place in the construction of subjectivity among any combination of dominant and subordinate groups. Members of any dominant race, class or gender can only maintain their superior power position at an emotional level by sacrificing the immediacy of their desire in order to hide any signs of vulnerability or openness. Correspondingly, through their control over the terms of key discourses, they are in a position to force members of subordinate groups to take on such 'weaknesses' as part of their subjectivities. As Jean Baker Miller argues, members of dominant classes and races, as well as the dominant gender are able to disown "their bodily, their sexual, their childish experiences, their feelings of weakness, vulnerability, helplessness, and other similar unresolved areas... Some of the areas of life denied by the dominant groups are relegated and projected onto all subordinate groups... They cannot be projected very far away. One must *have* them nearby, even if one can still deny *owning* them" (1988 p.47).

It has been conventional for members of the aristocratic and bourgeois classes to construct themselves as "gentlemen" and "ladies", expressing emotion only in a 'correct' and ritualised manner. In their discourses, they tend to situate members of the peasant and working classes so that they appear "earthy" and "common", representations of an almost 'animal' sensuality. Similarly, racist oppression may be seen to exert a specific impact on the construction of desire within the subjectivity of

black people (and, conversely, a reciprocal distortion in relation to the construction of subjectivity among white people):

> "Blacks, like women, have been constructed as possessing the characteristics that are negatively valued in white western culture, for example. emotionality, sexuality and hedonism... Racism reproduces itself not only ... at an economic and social level, but also through the power relations between white and black people and the subjectivities which these produce and reproduce in both" (Henriques et al 1984 p.89).

In summary, a reworking of psychoanalysis from a critical perspective provides a basis for understanding how our awareness of our desires, and of our ability to express ourselves as women and men, are crucially determined by our induction into the social relations of a specific social formation. From object-relations theory, we have an insight into how men internalise feelings towards women, and women internalise feelings about themselves, in terms of the split "good" object / "bad" object. From Lacan, Althusser and Henriques et al, we have an understanding of how the identities of women and men, and of black people and white people, may be constructed in relation to patriarchal and imperialist distortions of desire, and to the bourgeois illusion of automomy. This illustrates how oppressive processes at the levels of emotionality and ideology may interlock. As is emerging from this study of psychoanalytic theory, it is the family which appears as the primary site of operation and reproduction of certain oppressive power relations at the levels of ideology and emotionality, and this will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Transactional Analysis: Subject positions and adaptations within the organisation of subjectivity

In this section I will look at the contribution that may be made by Transactional Analysis (TA) towards deconstructing the way in which the subjectivity of an 'individual' is organised within a specific social formation. As with Freud's original distinction between id, ego and super ego, TA has probed beneath the supposed unity of the bourgeois subject to expose an array of (often conflicting) subject positions, each of which corresponds to a distinctive way in which a person may experience her/himself and relate to others. However, whereas Freud described a conflict that was essentially abstract and internal, Eric Berne (1964) sought to isolate separate modes of "being in the world" which were directly observable. These were characterised as autonomous organisations of thoughts, feelings and behaviours that could be manifested in the various distinct and conflicting ways that the same person may be observed to transact with others.

What is absent from Berne's an account is an appreciation of how these observed inconsistencies reflect more than just a diverse inheritance of influences, but can result from the internalisation of the relations of oppression, conflict and contradiction that may have characterised the social context in which a person was inserted as an infant. As with psychoanalysis, the theoretical account of TA rests on the assumption of a process of 'normal' development that is situated within a Western bourgeois family form that is seen as somehow inevitable and universal - an assumption that requires to be challenged in a critical rereading of

TA concepts that sees as problematic issues of gender, class, race or sexual orientation. While it may lack some of the stark pointers to oppression that emerge from psychoanalytic accounts - the splitting of experience into conscious and unconscious, or on to 'good' and 'bad' objects - TA nevertheless provides a vocabulary for looking at more subtle (but insidious) mechanisms whereby the repression and distortion of subjectivity may take place, and external contradictions may become internalised. Whereas there is now a substantial literature that seeks to rework psychoanalytic concepts from a critical perspective, the influence of TA has remained very much within a professional arena of therapy where there has been little encounter with critical social theory. Therefore the exposition and reworking of TA concepts that I attempt here must be seen as very much of a preliminary exercise.

The first stage of Berne's analysis of separate modes of "being in the world" was his distinction between three possible "ego-states": "Child", "Adult" and "Parent" (1964 p.23). (In TA, capital letters are conventionally used to distinguish the names of ego-states from actual children, adults and parents). In our terms, these may be seen as three sets of closely inter-related subject positions. According to Berne, they correspond respectively to how a person learned to deal with the world as an infant, how s/he deals with what is going on in the immediate present, and how s/he learned from significant others that s/he should deal with the world (by instruction or example). In turn, ego-states may comprise a number of separate and distinct elements, each element being, in turn, an autonomous set of inter-related thoughts, feelings and behaviours, developed through repeated interactions with

significant others - others who themselves would not be transacting as unitary individuals, but from their own specific ensemble of (conflicting) Parent, Adult and Child ego-states.

In order to develop these concepts in a way that is not purely descriptive, or relating them to some supposedly natural (and universal) developmental schema, it is necessary to place them within a context of social power relations. What fundamentally distinguishes these three ensembles of subject positions are issues of power and responsibility. Taking on a Child subject position implies that either one is powerless to take full responsibility for one's own thoughts, feelings or actions (as in the case of the legal/moral space into which an actual child is conventionally inserted), or one is in a position of power over others in which one can opt out of such responsibility and to pass it over to someone else (as in the example of a husband who constructs his wife as responsible for his own violence). By contrast, one may only take on an Adult subject position if one occupies, at that moment, a structural position that empowers one to take responsibility for one's current thoughts, feelings and actions - in other words, a position which permits one to be assertive and capable.

In taking on a Parent subject position, one assumes responsibility for another's experience and transactions. Such a position may imply that one is in a position to exercise control over the other (whether abusively or protectively), or simply that, through powerlessness, one is forced into a position of taking responsibility for an other over whom one has no control (as in the situation of a wife taking

responsibility for her husband's violence). Thus, by situating the concept of "ego-state" in relation to those of responsibility and power, we may see how the fact that a person transacts from, say, a Child (or a Parent) subject position, relates not just to some personal choice that is ultimately under her/his internal jurisdiction, but may also relate to a restriction of her/his potential subjectivity due to the specific power relations in which s/he is currently inserted.

From the perspective of TA, it is suggested that the Parent ego-state may be seen to comprise functionally separate organisations of thinking, feeling and behaviour relating to the processes of care (Nurturing Parent) or of control (Controlling Parent). Within a patriarchal social formation, it is readily available to a man to take on a Controlling Parent position from which to coerce others into acting, feeling or thinking in particular ways (ultimately to protect his privileged position). It is much less available to him to take on a Nurturing Parent subject position in order to take responsibility for the welfare of another person who might otherwise be vulnerable to abuse or neglect. By contrast women (and sometimes children) are often thrust into the responsibility of the Nurturing Parent position, not out of any positive choice, but out of some combination of externally experienced coercion and an internalised sense of obligation. Similarly, the range of available Parent subject positions (and the implications of these) are likely to vary according to one's position within structures of oppression based on class, race, disability or sexual orientation.

The Parent ego-state may be seen as crucial in how people reproduce prevailing ideology within everyday discourses. Typically, in order to take on responsibility for others within a specific social formation, we have to demonstrate that we are 'fit' to do so - that we adhere to the required set of attitudes, assumptions and values (which we may have internalised from observing those who have previously taken responsibility for us). They constitute an ideological "frame of reference" by which experience is selectively (mis)perceived, filtered and evaluated, and which (among other things) legitimates the inability of the other to be responsible for him/her self (for example, through specific historical constructions of gender roles or assumptions about childhood). As Schiff suggests, the Parent ego-state "contains all the definitional parameters within which people function" (1975 p.88). Thus the person occupying the Parent position may be seen both to be subjected within a body of ideology and, at the same time, promulgating it to the recipient of their care or control, who is rendered particularly vulnerable to accepting it without question.

TA uses the concept of "Free Child" to represent a Child subject position which permits the raw and unsocialised expression of feeling and desire. It implies the existence of an idealised original 'self', an essential human 'nature' that is not mediated by any form of social connection or experience. As such, it would seem to represent the return of the bourgeois individual - albeit in much diminished form. It denies the reality that, from the very point of conception, an infant is already in-relationship-with-others, at the very least in terms of issues such as heredity and material survival.

While the concept of "Free Child" has no place within a critical reformulation, other identified 'functional' aspects of the Child ego-state are of potential value. These signify subject positions that may be seen to be constructed out of struggle and interaction, out of negotiation between the relative powerlessness of the infant as against the significant others on whom its survivial depends. Depending on the specific circumstances, an infant may seek to negotiate its desire in relation to the other by complying with their perceived expectations (Adapted Child position), or by doing the opposite (Rebellious Child position) - see also Kahler's use of the term "Vengeful Child" (1978 p.16). In both instances, although the infant is forced to take on a position in relation to a discourse that is defined by the other, these subject positions may nevertheless allow the infant some opportunity to negotiate recognition or connection, albeit in partial, indirect or distorted ways. The development of these subject positions may be seen as the infant's only possible responses to its relative powerlessness: they entail the use of feelings, actions and intuition so as to manipulate the responses of an otherwise unreachable other, but always at the cost of alienating its own desire to some degree.

All functional ego-states (Nurturing/Controlling Parent, Adult and Adapted/Rebellious Child) potentially allow some (albeit distorted) expression of desire, some experience of connectedness and recognition - although they reflect a choice of subject positions that may have been determined, to a large extent, by the power relations that obtained at crucial points in a person's history. It is in this way that they may be seen to differ from a second category of subject positions, or

"roles" that have been proposed within TA theory. Karpman (1968) identified three key roles which he saw as underlying many instances of repetitive (and ultimately futile) interaction. He suggested that people inserted themselves (and switched between) such roles as a substitute to transacting from positions that allowed any possibility of self-expression. On the one hand, they may be seen as defences against showing any real vulnerability in certain situations. In some instances, such as the organisation of 'masculinity', people may have recourse to role positions as a way as maintaining their 'mastery' of the situation. On the other hand, they may be a recourse of desperation in a situation where there seems to be no way of resisting or contesting oppression - a way of hiding from the pain and the danger of what is really going on. Moving into such a position may be at some considerable cost to the person involved, both in the sense that s/he renders her/himself powerless to resolve the real situation, and that s/he may, in fact, be inviting further abuse or exploitation.

It is suggested that a person may switch between role positions and each role position may be associated with a "self-reinforcing, distorted system of feelings, thoughts and actions" (Erskine and Zalcman 1979). In a role position, a person will fall back on a familiar routine of circular thinking and ineffective behaviour that is termed a "racket". This distances her/him from having to deal with the real situation, and may hook others into playing complementary roles. Examples of these would include the forms of "passive behaviour" identified by Jacqui Schiff: doing nothing, over-adaptation, agitation and incapacitation or violence (1975 p.10). Transacting from each role position may also

engender familiar but superficial "racket" feelings which act as a smokescreen to distance a person from what s/he may be feeling about the underlying reality of her/his situation (see English 1971). Racket feelings, such as anxiety, guilt, aggression and euphoria, do not lead to an appreciation or resolution of the real situation which the person is actually facing, whereas more direct feelings, such as anger, fear, joy and sadness, may lead to change, negotiation and recognition.

From a critical perspective, role positions may be seen to be exaggerations or caricatures of functional ego-states: organisations of personal subjectivity that are no longer *negotiated* so as to permit some self-expression or contact, but are purely defensive in only allowing a predictable and ritualised series of interactions with others. In this way, the Rescuer role may be understood as an exaggeration of a Nurturing Parent position, when a person finds her/himself in the position of sacrificing her/his own needs and feelings completely in order to look after the perceived needs of another, while, at the same time, discounting whatever ability the latter may have to attend to their own needs. Within a patriarchal social formation, this subject position may be seen to be one which is particularly familiar to women. Similarly, a compliant Adapted Child position switches over into a Victim role when a person gives up trying to look after or stand up for her/himself, and allows others to take over. In an oppressive social formation, it is those who are already victims of structural oppression whose circumstances are most likely to force them into taking on the Victim role and to discount their needs and abilities in this way. In certain situations, this is almost expected of black people, gay or

minority groups. The third role identified by Karpman may be seen as an exaggeration of a Controlling Parent subject position; this becomes a Persecutor role when a person starts to transact in a way that is simply punitive. It represents an explosion of oppressive power play: an attempt to put down the other while, at the same time, hiding any real expression of desire, distress or vulnerability. It may be seen to be a subject position that is utilised particularly by Western men, who will typically construct themselves so as to remain in control, even at the expense of leaving their more intimate needs unmet.

Although Karpman only identified three role positions, I think it may be useful to differentiate a fourth. Following on from Kahler's distinction between righteous (Parent) and aggressive (Child) anger (1978 p.106), I would suggest that it could be useful to distinguish an exaggeration of a Rebellious Child ego-state that is different from a Persecutor role. I shall term this an 'Aggressor' role. Instead of the active confrontation that is characteristic of a Rebellious Child position, a person may fall back into futile attacking: picking fights in ways that mask the expression of real grievances, wants and needs, and where the recipient may be faced with anger that relates to an issue that is not being expressed, or that should actually have been directed at someone else. Whereas the Persecutor role places the person in a position to put the other down, the Aggressor role lacks such a context of 'power over' and represents a position from which the person simply lashes out, physically or verbally, at whatever target is immediately available. Such a role would be particularly available, for example, to male members of relatively powerless groups (young, working class and/or

black). For them it is only possible to live out a caricature of patriarchal power. They may construct their subjectivity within an image of 'macho' and hook others into engaging in almost ritualised violence, not directed against the source of their oppression, but at others who are similarly powerless. However, in doing so, they are able to hide from the real hurt that they would experience if they remained in the Rebellious Child position, and found themselves powerless to have their distress attended to and their grievances addressed.

Although Karpman's work was formulated outside any understanding of power relations, it becomes easy to see how people in different structural power positions are more or less likely to insert themselves in particular roles, and in what circumstances. All roles offer the opportunity to manipulate (and be manipulated by) others into taking part in a ritualised pattern of interaction - one that 'protects' participants from having to address their real concerns and desires, and hence serves to maintain the status quo. A white bourgeois man can utilise the position of Persecutor in order to stifle the posibility of any renegotiation of power relationships with others. He can use the role to maintain the stuckness of a situation of inequality (although this may be at the expense of attending to some of his more intimate needs). However, although Victims (or Rescuers) may appear influential (for example, within the dynamics of a family), the only 'power' that they have is to stay stuck in an abusive situation and to hook others into staying stuck with them. A woman may appear powerful as a Victim or a Rescuer, but not in terms of having any real choice for herself or any opportunity to confront or renegotiate her situation:

> "It can sometimes seem much easier to be, and remain, the victim than to struggle for oneself ... For even in a situation that is objectively destructive, the victim does not have to confront her own desires to change the situation ... nor the anger that has accumulated over her victimised position ... Since society so firmly encourages women to remain in this position ... to attempt to change the situation threatens women with no place to go" (Baker Miller 1988 p.122).

One of the most exciting developments in Transactional Analysis in recent years has been the work done by Kahler (1979) on understanding personality adaptations in terms of dynamic process (see also Ware 1983; Klein 1985; Joines 1986). Whereas the ego-state models are essentially static, naming an array of potential subject positions, this work looks at how adaptive decisions, made in response to the situation prevailing around the time of the entry into discourse, can determine a person's preferred transactional repertoire in later life (and hence much of what we see as their personality). In a sense, this may be seen to represent a more flexible reworking of the psychoanalytic notion of repression.

A critical appraisal of childhood would suggest that, in order to survive, an infant must learn to co-exist with powerful and significant others, each with their own distinct configurations of subject positions located within each ego-state. This would take place in a particular context of material, ideological and emotional relations, which would tend to have a determining effect on the range of permissable responses (and subject positions) available to the infant. Due to its extreme

powerlessness and the potential threat to its survivial if it did not conform to expectations - at least in some situations - the infant would have no choice but to try to make sense of the expectations that are placed upon it and organise its subjectivity in a particular way that excludes certain potential subject positions and types of transaction.

Linking this to Kahler's dynamic understanding of personality adaptations, it may be sugested that the infant comes to establish a specific repertoire of 'acceptable' responses, comprising some combination of direct expression, copying or compliance. Such an adaptation is seen as a response to messages internalised from the Parent ego states of parent figures. Such messages (termed "drivers") take the form "You are acceptable (to me) only if you..." and may be seen as a key mechanism for the reproduction, at an unconscious level, of patriarchal, capitalist or racist ideologies. The specific drivers that he proposed were those to Be Perfect, to Please (others), to Try Hard, to Be Strong, or to Hurry Up - although this list may not be exhaustive, and each driver may be subject to variation given the specific circumstances of childhood. He suggested that each of us has a particular driver that is most dominant in our personal organisation, although one or more of the others may become prominent in specific situations. In this way a 'blueprint' may be constructed for (and by) an infant which defines the particular ensemble of subject positions from which it may customarily transact in later life, whether as Child, Adult or Parent. Such configurations may undergo continual modification in the light of subsequent experience, but may nevertheless constitute a continual and oppressive restriction of transactional possibilities.

The degree to which a person is driven to conform to her/his particular adaptation is seen to relate to the degree of stress s/he is currently experiencing. Placing this within a context of power relations, we may see that the degree to which an adaptation comes to distort a person's subjectivity at any instant may relate (both in infancy and in later life) to her/his current sense of powerlessness and threat (or, conversely, of support and empowerment). If a person is inserted into a current situation in which s/he feels as threatened or as powerless as s/he may have done in infancy, s/he may feel that s/he has little choice but to fall back on the same limited repertoire of responses which had appeared to ensure survival at that time. Thus, instead of conceptualising a relatively permanent boundary between 'conscious' and 'unconscious', this would suggest a relatively fluid 'transactional horizon' that permits more or less expression, depending on the specific circumstances into which the person is inserted. Kahler linked the concept of "driver" to distinctive sets of words, tones, gestures and expressions that a person might display which could indicate that a particular adaptation was governing the operation of her/his subjectivity.

Kahler (1979) further suggested that each adaptation reflects preferences for - or relative facility in - particular transactional levels (feelings, thought or behaviour). A given adaptation is seen as representing a set of preferences of how we deal with the world: the level at which we make and regulate contact (contact level) and the one at which we choose to transact at greater depth once contact is made (target level). Of particular significance is the transactional level

which may be all but excluded by the operation of the driver in any situation in which we may feel threatened or powerless (the trap level). It is at this level that we may need to be supported and empowered before we can be spontaneous and effective in expressing our thoughts, feelings or actions (as the case may be). A simplified summary of Kahler's associations between drivers and a person's relative ease with different transactional levels is given below:

DRIVER-ADAPTATION	CONTACT LEVEL	TARGET LEVEL	TRAP LEVEL
Please, Hurry Up	Feeling	Thinking	Behaviour
Be Perfect	Thinking	Feeling	Behaviour
Be Strong	Behaviour	Thinking	Feeling
Try Hard	Behaviour	Feeling	Thinking

Situating this within our earlier discussion of the impact of gender on transactional possibilities, it would appear likely that men's subjectivity would tend to be organised according to those adaptations that made either thinking or behaviour the contact level, whereas women would tend to be organised in relation to adaptations that made feeling the contact level. This correlation has partly been borne out by the research of Hazell (1989). From his sample, more than twice as many men as women were identified with the Be Perfect driver-adaptation for which thinking is the contact level, whereas the reverse was true for the Please driver-adaptation for which feelings are the contact level. Perhaps surprisingly, the Be Strong driver-adaptation (in which feelings are the trap level, guarded by a contact level of behaviour) proved to be a more frequent adaptation for women than men (although it was still the second most frequent adaptation for men). It is easy to see how,

for men, feelings of vulnerability may typically be suppressed in order that their activity may result in some form of personal achievement or authority. However, such an explanation would seem implausible in relation to the experience of most women. Viewed from an understanding of patriarchal oppression, we may suggest that, for women, the exclusion of feelings is more likely to result from experiences of abuse and domination, and that their emotionality would be concealed behind a contact level of activity that would be directed not towards personal achievement, but towards the service of others. Thus for women, the Be Strong driver might more accurately be termed a 'Keep Quiet' driver-adaptation. As yet, no research has been conducted to establish any correlations between driver-adaptations and other instances of structural oppression on the basis of, say, class, race, disability or sexual orientation.

In Kahler's schema, there are two possible permutations of preferences for transactional levels which he has not theorised as corresponding to any specific driver-adaptation. This would suggest that there are further adaptations that may be significant. I will propose ways of conceptualising these two 'missing' adaptations, but this must be viewed as purely speculative at this stage. There is always the possibility of more than one organising principle resulting in the same order of transactional preferences (as in the case of a men's Be Strong driver and a women's Keep Quiet driver). In the forgoing analysis, personality adaptations have been seen as responses to expectations that are pervasive within prevailing ideology, and so may be expected to vary significantly as between specific historical and cultural contexts.

Within the prevailing Western social formation, structural inequalities lead to pervasive experiences of domination and abuse. For those born into the ruling group and other positions of potential 'power over', there may be an expectation that they appear as 'natural' leaders, and they may develop, in response, a drive to Take Charge. Similarly, for those who experience violation and abuse of their persons, an adaptation to appear to Be In Control may seem to be the only safe way of containing the extremes of violence, hurt and disgust that may otherwise seem overwhelming and have no possibility of expression within the current configuration of power relations. This would suggest the possibility of a driver-adaptation to Take Charge or to Be In Control (of self and/or others) where feelings of vulnerability would constitute the trap level. Control must first of all be secured at the level of behaviour and activity - so this would constitute the contact level. Transactional preferences for behaviour, thinking and feeling, in that order, correspond to an assumption of conventional 'leadership' qualities - an ability to act that is informed by thinking and not by emotion.

The other significant adaptation that I would suggest could result from being inserted into a position that is fundamentally devalued - and thus be an adaptation particularly common for women, black people and members of the "hard-living" working class. In response to an internalised message that gives little or no sense of their right to 'be' - to exist at all - a person might adapt by continually striving after recognition. To an outside observer, such non-stop movement would correspond to what Kahler observed as the Hurry Up driver - as the person experiences so

little permission to exist, s/he does not have the luxury of being able to relax and sustain her/himself on any internalised feelings of self-esteem. Such an adaptation might better be termed a driver to 'Keep Going'. Having to be 'on the go' all the time, would mean that the person would have little or no time to think - or, at least to think clearly - and so this would constitute her/his trap level. Although never still, the person may be too frenetic to be much at ease at the level of activity; what s/he is primarily seeking is contact at the level of feelings - some emotional recognition of her/his existence and experience. Incorporating these additional and modified driver-adaptations into the above schema, we have:

DRIVER-ADAPTATION	CONTACT LEVEL	TARGET LEVEL	TRAP LEVEL
Please (others)	Feeling	Thinking	Behaviour
Hurry Up/Keep Going	Feeling	Behaviour	Thinking
Try Hard	Behaviour	Feeling	Thinking
Be Strong/Keep Quiet	Behaviour	Thinking	Feeling
Take Charge/Be In Control	Thinking	Behaviour	Feeling
Be Perfect	Thinking	Feeling	Behaviour

To summarise, there are various sets of concepts that we may derive from TA which can be useful in exposing the political organisation of individual subjectivity, both in terms of what possibilities are open to people given their structural position within the social formation, and in terms of minute-by-minute changes in the way a person may present her/himself to the world - what may or may not be allowed above her/his transactional horizon. Firstly, we have the relatively autonomous organisations of subjectivity that may be adopted (and switched between), depending on whether one is empowered to take responsibility

for oneself (Adult ego-state), or is situated such that one is taking responsibility for others (Parent ego-state), or abdicating this responsibility to others (Child ego-state). Each of these potential organisations of subjectivity arise from a process of negotiation, allowing some expression of desire or capability, within the context of socially determined transactional possibilities (both past and present).

Distinct from these, we have identified subject positions (roles) which, like the psychoanalytic positions such as 'The Phallus', are available to people to occupy depending on their structural power positions within the social formation. For example, while the role positions of Persecutor or Aggressor may be less strictly gendered than, say, 'The Phallus', they may nevertheless be seen to be far more available to men than to women. Taking on role positions may be seen as attempts to retain a position of dominance or privilege, or to survive in positions of relative powerlessness, both at the expense of any open expression of real desires, wants or needs.

Finally, we have a way of understanding the overall organising principle by which the minute-by-minute transactional horizon of a subjectivity may be determined. The concept of driver-adaptation is more flexible than the psychoanalytic split between conscious and unconscious, one that can be related to the particular stresses (and power relations) of the current situation in which a person is inserted. Such an organising principle may be seen to determine the relative ease with which a person may or may not be able to transact at the levels of activity, discourse or emotionality.

Integrating concepts of power and subjectivity

In the previous chapter, we looked at a number of interlocking concepts by which to examine power relations, derived from Marxist, feminist and anti-racist perspectives. Here, these will be reviewed in the light of critical understandings of subjectivity, each set of concepts being allowed to inform and revise the other, in order to produce a consistent framework for analysis. The key concepts employed were as follows:

- Differentiation of power relations into those of 'power over' and those of 'power together'.
- Analysis of a social formation in terms of power *structures* - different social groups having unequal access to specific resources, or control over specific practices.
- Distinguishing between a social organisation based on a 'hierarchy' of 'power over' from one based on a 'web' of 'power together'.
- Analysis of how power relations may define the terms of interpersonal transactions - differentiation between transactions of domination/subordination (the exercise of 'power over') and those of recognition (the basis for constructing 'power together').
- Recognising the parallel operation of specific modes of oppression and resistance - for instance, the 'triple jeopardy' analysis of patriarchal, imperialist and feudal/capitalist oppression.
- Identifying separate but interlinking processes of oppression and empowerment taking place at different levels of the social formation (material relations, ideology or emotionality), expressed through distinct sets of transactions at the levels of activity, discourse or feeling.

In this Chapter, we have looked at how the bourgeois notion of 'the individual' may be opened up to critical analysis: no longer may it be viewed as a unitary, consistent and responsible whole, but instead it may be seen to represent the uneasy holding together of certain elements of personality - together with the repression of certain others - in line with what is required by the insertion of the person within specific structures of social relations. On the one hand, a critical understanding of subjectivity may lead us to re-examine and refine our various ways of conceptualisating power relations. On the other hand, a critical analysis of power relations must extend not only to an examination of social structures and interpersonal transactions, but also to an understanding of the processes that define and take place within the construction of personal subjectivity itself. In this way, concepts of power relations may be seen to have a determining effect on organisation *within* the individual as well as between individuals.

Our original definitions of power were as relations *between* people - whether in terms of people being in a position to have 'power over' others, or being in a position to develop 'power together' - given their location within wider power strucures (of capitalism, patriarchy, imperialism etc.). However, there is an inherent danger that such a formulation can reduce an understanding of empowerment to a liberal-bourgeois paradigm of 'individual choice', unless the concepts of power are allowed to penetrate beneath the supposed autonomy of 'the individual'. Thus 'the person' must be contextualised, not just in terms of being located within wider structures of power relations, but also in terms of how these power struggles may also take place within

and between various elements of personality. From the forgoing analysis, it may be seen that the concept of 'choice' itself is problematic, since it requires not just negotiation of possibilities in the external context, but a process of negotiation between the relative power of different and conflicting elements of personality that have been constructed during a person's history. Thus oppression may be seen to be internalised as well as external, and result in a restriction of possibilities for action or expression over and above that imposed by current subjection within structures of unequal power. Similarly, empowerment may be seen to include the recognition and opening up of possibilities *within* the organisation of a person's subjectivity through sharing with others with similar histories and experiences.

We have seen how social organisation may be understood in terms of membership (or non-membership) of groups who are collectively in a position to control access to specific resources or practices. Thus capitalists are placed in a position of structural power over working class people, white people are placed in a position of structural power over black people, and adult heterosexual men are placed in a position of structural power over women, gay men, children and older people. Thus, people come to be organised, formally or informally, according to their common structural power position (e.g. trade union or employers' association). As we have seen, people who share a common experience of disempowerment may organise themselves according to some sort of 'web' of connectedness, whereas those in positions of 'power over' tend to remain situated in some sort of a 'hierarchy', both in relation to other members of dominant groups and to members of subordinated groups.

In turn, this may determine how personal subjectivity comes to be organised. People who occupy positions of 'power over' may tend to hide their vulnerability, due to the potential threat to their position posed by others within a necessarily hierarchical organisation, and so have no choice but to construct themselves as a 'self-in-isolation'. By contrast, those who experience their oppression together may tend to organise themselves much more as a 'self-in-relation' - partly out of choice, but also because everyday material and emotional survival may demand this. Furthermore, the concepts of 'web' and 'hierarchy' may be seen to be equally applicable to the deconstruction of the person. The internal organisation of the fractured elements that comprise personal subjectivity may be on the basis of 'hierarchy', with certain elements having been given 'power over' others, due to the way that the person has been inserted within past or present transactional structures. In partiular, one element may be given the power to substitute for and repress another. By contrast, elements of subjectivity may also be organised on the basis of a mutually supportive 'web' of connectedness (for example, a sense of having rights in one context may reinforce a sense of having rights in another). Thus, just as certain social institutions (such as the family) may be seen to comprise elements of both 'hierarchy' and 'web' in their internal organisation, so both of these concepts may be applied to an analysis of personal subjectivity.

Parallel to our analysis of social power structures is an analysis of the power relations inherent in any interpersonal transaction that takes place within an oppressive social formation. As we have seen, people who belong to groups in positions of unequal power will tend to transact

on the basis of domination or subordination. By contrast, those who occupy a common structural power position may engage in transactions of (mutual) recognition - the basis of constructing 'power together'. We must now re-examine this analysis of transactions in the light of a critical understanding of subjectivity. Such transactions do not take place between unitary individuals, but between particular elements of the self-organisation of each individual. Instead of the bourgeois notion of the autonomous individual simply being in charge of the transactions s/he chooses to make, each person may also be seen to be constructed as a subjectivity *by* her/his very insertion within transactions of a particular type.

Transactions of domination and subordination inevitably construct a form of subjectivity that will exaggerate or exclude certain elements of personality, and may preclude any form of self expression as in the case of subject positions such as 'The Phallus' or the Victim role position. Understanding the impact of transactions of recognition is more complex, since that-which-is-to-be-recognised is not the straightforward bourgeois individual, but an ensemble of accessible and hidden subject positions: a set of often contradictory elements that, by definition, cannot be fully comprehended within prevailing discursive structures. Thus, recognition can, at best, only be partial. Even the accurate appreciation of - and response to - those elements that are allowed above a person's transactional horizon, represents, at the same time, a denial and rejection of those elements that are currently being suppresed - a denial that thereby colludes with the person's existing experience of oppression. Recognition can only be seen as empowering

when it involves the appreciation of some element that the person had hitherto seen the need to repress.

It may be seen that such transactions may take place internally within the person, as well as externally between different people. The processes whereby certain elements of personality are repressed, and substituted by distorting or alienating elements, may be seen as instances of internal transactions of domination and subordination. Similarly, at the scale of the individual, empowerment may be seen in terms of internal transactions of recognition - appreciating and mobilising feelings, thoughts or potential actions that had previously been excluded from awareness.

The remaining elements of our conceptual framework fit easily with critical notions of subjectivity. The various identified modes of oppression and resistance - the 'triple jeopardy' of patriarchy, imperialism and capitalism/feudalism - may be seen to operate and be determining whether it be in relation to the organisation of social institutions, a conversation, or an intra-personal conflict between elements of desire and internalised prohibitions. The construction of subjectivity depends on the availability of external transactions in which to participate. Such availability may be seen to relate crucially, within the current social formation, to one's position as white or black, man or woman, gay or straight, able or disabled, adult or child (or older person). On the one hand, those who are disempowered by such social relations will suffer specific restrictions in how they may construct themselves in their dealings with members of the groups

that currently have power over them. On the other hand, common experience of a particular mode of oppression opens up the possibility of transactions of recognition - appreciating the shared elements within their overall experience that had hitherto been excluded from expression, but of which each member of the oppresed the group may have been dimly aware - perhaps just some feeling of tension, anger or frustration.

The analytic separation of processes taking place at the levels of material relations, discourse and emotionality may be applied to structures of any scale. Just as it is helpful to identify specific struggles at the scale of the social formation as a whole, say in terms of the economic exploitation of working class people, this may be seen to be reflected in a parallel struggle taking place within the psyche of the individual worker - the distortion of her/his subjectivity that is required in order for her/him to construct her/himself as a work subject who is apparently willing to sell her/his labour power at a price which is below its real value to the capitalist. From the perspective of social history, it may be seen that power struggles between groups take place at a different pace at different levels of the social formation: an improvement in, say, welfare provision may be accomplished under a discourse of paternalism, indicating that struggle for rights at the level of ideology may lag behind that at the level of material survival.

Similarly, as we have seen, within the construction of individual subjectivity, certain adaptations lead to a greater ability to be effective in transactions at, say, the level of activity, rather than

at, say, the level of emotionality. This may lead a person to be much further on in resisting her/his oppresion at one transactional level than another. Thus, action to resist domination (for example, a woman choosing to leave her violent husband) may be accompanied by feelings of guilt and failure (indicating that the woman is still defining herself within the emotional structures of patriarchy). Conversely, a woman may be clear that her feelings of fear and anger are telling her that she is ready to leave, but the unavailability of suitable accommodation may prevent her from taking the necessary action. Thus, while there will usually be interconnections between processes taking place at different levels or at diferent scales of social/personal organisation, such connections may not always be straightforward.

Arising out of this discussion, let us summarise what may be meant by the terms 'oppression' and 'empowerment' within a critical analytical framework. Instead of defining oppression in terms of the restriction of individual choice, we may now see this in terms of restriction of transactional repertoire through different social groups having unequal access to specific sets of subject positions within the organisation of a social formation. Ruling groups may be seen as those who have managed to secure privileged access to particular subject positions within prevailing economic, discursive and emotional structures - ones that give them effective control over vital resources and social practices, and hence opportunities to force other groups into subject positions of subordination if they wish to participate in (and even survive within) the current social order. These structures may exist at all scales of a social formation, being integral to the construction of nation states,

workplaces, families, personal subjectivities and so on. On a day to day basis, these structures are reproduced through the terms under which material, discursive and emotional transactions may be conducted: those of domination and subordination.

Empowerment may perhaps best be defined as the ability to move into subject positions that offer opportunities for renegotiation, sharing, resistance and collective action. It is important to note that the goal of empowerment is not (as in bourgeois notions of power and competition) to achieve power over others, or over other elements of oneself, but is to achieve an equal right of participation. At any scale of social/personal organisation, it involves entering into (and maintaining) internal and external transactions of recognition that continually open up new experiences, ideas and opportunities - the broadening of a transactional repertoire. Similarly, it involves linking in with other people (or parts of oneself) with a shared experience of oppression, first of all to achieve consciousness of an injustice, and then to renegotiate specific power structures, so that all members of a group have accepted rights of access to hitherto unavailable subject positions (whether material, discursive or emotional). For example, black people and women are still struggling for equal access to employee subject positions - to be able to go to a job interview on an equal rather than a subordinate basis in relation to white men. Such a struggle for empowerment may be seen to take place simultaneously within the organisation of the personal subjectivities of the people concerned, and between (organised) groups of such people and institutionalised power structures.

Defined in these terms, empowerment is a complex and dynamic process of subtle changes in organisation. It is a process of continual struggle in which superficial advances may mask the underlying continuity of oppressive relations, or may cumulatively contribute to bringing about permanent changes in access to key subject positions - an understanding that derives form Gramsci's 'War of Position'. Whereas Gramsci's analysis was constructed in relation to changes in the power structures of a nation state, similar principles may be seen to apply in relation to the organisation of families and individual subjectivities. Thus empowerment may be seen not as an all-or-nothing process of individuals having or being denied their 'choices' - as in bourgeois notions of 'democracy', but an incremental process of struggle and rearrangement, one that (even momentarily) opens up potential subject positions and transactional possibilities that had previously been denied by some combination of internalised and external oppression. Once deconstructed in this way, 'individuals' (and potentially 'families') may be seen as organisations that may both open up and repress specific transactional possibilities. Furthermore, what may open up a 'choice' for the unit as a whole may simultaneously close off possibilities for constituent elements. Such an understanding of empowerment has implications, not just for theory, but also for research methodology (see Chapter 9). Defined in these terms, empowerment may no longer be measured in any straightforward way, such as, say, a consumer survey. Expressed satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) may only give limited clues as to the real position since, by definition, people will tend to be unaware of the transactional possibilities from which they are excluded until they are in a situation that allows and supports their emergence.

5: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE FAMILY

Introduction

In comparison with entities such as the 'individual' or 'society', there has been relatively little theoretical work done on the 'family' as an object of study in its own right. The subject area lies uncomfortably between the scales of analysis and the orientations of psychology, sociology, anthropology and economics. The term 'the family' is itself the subject of much ambiguity and confusion, as it is used to describe a material and emotional entity that does not correspond neatly either with the social relations of kinship or with those of cohabitation:

> "It is important to ask what a family is and how it may best be defined... No single criterion such as blood relationships, marriage ties or membership of a household is adequate. 'The family' is a relative term, whose meaning can change with time and place, with class and sex" (Jordanova 1981 p.44).

The 'family' may also exist as an idea that is constructed and manipulated within political discourse: as an organisation of values and sentiments that is relatively autonomous in relation to any actual family forms, but nevertheless may have a determining influence on how people (try to) live. It is helpful to differentiate 'the family' as a set of ideas and values from 'the family' as a set of material relationships: the two may often be out of step with one another at any particular historical conjuncture, but both may be of equal importance in any critical analysis:

> "The contradictions between the ideological intentions of the family and its socio-economic base do not mean that we say the former is false" (Mitchell 1971 p.156; see also Barrett and McIntosh 1982).

In looking at critical understandings of 'the family', it is necessary to situate our discussion within a historical and trans-cultural perspective. The modern Western nuclear family must be seen as only one form of familial organisation among many. In fact, the word 'family', meaning a unit of co-resident kin, does not exist in many cultures:

> "Among the Zinacantecos of southern Mexico, the basic social unit is defined as a 'house', which may include from 1 to 20 people. Zinacantecos have no difficulty talking about an individual's parents, children or spouse; but Zinacantecos do not have a single word that identifies the unit of parents and children in such a way as to cut it off from other units" (Collier et al 1982 p.28).

Similarly, the use of 'family' to mean co-resident kin only emerged in European languages in relatively recent times. Mitterauer and Sieder (1982) found that no such word was to be found in the German language until the Middle Ages. Similarly Flandrin found that, up until the eighteenth century, French dictionaries defined a 'family' either:

> (i) "As a group of co-residents not necessarily linked by blood or marriage", or
>
> (ii)"As a set of kin who did not live together" (1979 p.4).

Thus, there were two essentially separate meanings of the term 'family': on the one hand, a system of kinship organised around a lineage, and on the other, a co-resident household comprising a domestic labour force

and other lodgers, many of whom would not be related by any ties of blood or marriage, but all of whom would be subject to the authority of the male head of household; it is only with the emergence of the bourgeois nuclear family that these two meanings became conflated.

The work of other historians (Aries 1973, Shorter 1976, and Stone 1977) has emphasised the variety and real discontinuity in Western family forms. Placed together with cross-cultural perspectives derived from anthropology, this starts to provide the foundation for a critical perspective on conventional notions on 'the family', both as a (Western bourgeois) ideal, and as a set of actual material relations between women and men, and between adults and children. There is much evidence that the process of family history is not one of the gradual evolution of a single form, but is marked by multiple forms (related to culture and social class) and relatively sudden transitions from one form to another. In recent times, there have emerged explicit challenges to the prevailing forms of family organisation, from the kibbutz to feminist and alternative households. Lesbians and gay men have openly constructed their own living arrangements, and women have *chosen* to be single parents. In order to illustrate this variety of family forms, I will give a brief overview of some of the specific models by which familial relations have been organised, each of which may, in turn, vary according to cultural and historical context. (For example, the organisation of a black working class family may differ significantly from its white counterpart, due to its particular cultural heritage and experience of racism.) This selection is not intended, by any means, to be exhaustive.

The family-community

In some traditional societies, it is clearly meaningless to break down the social organisation of a community into discrete 'family' units of parents and children. If the word 'family' is to have any useful meaning in such contexts, it can only be to connote the specific organisation of 'familiar' relationships between men and women, and between adults and children:

> "Among the Mundurucu of tropical South America ... the men of the village traditionally lived in a men's house with all the village boys over the age of 13; women lived with other women and young children in two or three houses grouped around the men's house. In Mundurucu society, men and women ate and slept apart. Men ate in the men's house, sharing food the women had cooked and delivered to them; women ate with other women and children in their own houses" (Collier et al 1982 p.28).

Mundurucu society had overtly patriarchal elements, particularly at the level of material relations. In terms of the division of labour, it was the Mundurucu women who had to cook for the men and look after their children. As women were not co-resident with men, it would appear that the closest emotional relationships would be within, rather than across, gender groups, with a husband and wife "meeting only for sexual intercourse" (ibid.).

There has been considerable debate within anthropology as to whether, despite the absence of conventional family forms in more communal societies, patriarchal control over women's economic activity and

sexuality may nevertheless be universal as an underlying structure. Meillassoux (1981), who studied West African societies, found he was consistently able to define discrete domestic units on the basis of identifying a male figure who not only exerted authority over the organisation of economic production and distribution, but also over reproduction and child-rearing practices. He also found that among the men of the community there was an elite group of elders who collecively made and enforced decisions in relation both to other men and to all women and children - an intersection of class and patriarchal domination.

Such a universal male domination of family relations in African societies has been disputed by Leacock (1978), who suggests that it was the impact of colonialism that led to the removal of women from significant positions in public and economic life. Olivia Harris argues the need for a more detailed analysis to highlight the very significant variation in the degree of patriatrchal control within the family relations of different cultures:

> "In agrarian societies men and women may own different sorts of property and control independently what is produced from it; or economic transactions between wife and husband can take the form of commodity exchange, as is found in parts of East and West Africa... Children too cannot be assumed to be under the direct, exclusive control of a household head. There are many examples of women's control of the labour of their children, a control which is jealously guarded... The nature and extent of [patriarchal] control needs to be investigated and specified" (1985 p.126).

The aristocratic family form

In material terms, the European aristocratic household comprised a large unit of between 20 and 200 people, the majority of whom would not be blood relations of the household head but would be involved in running the household and the estate (see Poster 1978). The house itself would be a public and political place - a place to be seen in, not a place for privacy, even in terms of sleeping arrangements. For male aristocrats, both the meanings of 'family' identified by Flandrin provided the ideological legitimatation for their continued control over the social order: lineage guaranteed the system of inheritance of wealth and status, while the 'house' formed the unit for the exploitation of the domestic labour of relatives and servants. In Europe, while the head of household - the 'paterfamilias' - was conventionally a man, a woman could take on the stewardship of the man's role (as if she were a man) until the next adult male heir became available. This contrasts with the even more overtly patriarchal nature of Far Eastern feudalism:

> "In most parts of Europe historically a widow has replaced her dead husband, thus asserting that criteria of age and the status of parenthood are prior to those of sex. In Japan however, a boy however young would traditionally be preferred to an adult woman" (Harris 1985 p.128; see also Koyama 1962).

Lineage and inheritance were seen as all important, so that marriage, and the arrangement of suitable partners by the respective families, was essentially a political and economic decision. As a consequence, there was little expectation that sexual relations be confined to marriage and

so the nobility (both male and female) practiced what Stone (1977) refers to as "serial polygamy". Noble women were seen as having their own sexuality, and there was no expectation on them to be concerned with child-rearing or house management. Children would be looked after by servants. According to Poster (1978), children would tend to be treated more as pets than as human beings in their own right: they could be seen as objects of vicarious amusement by adults, and were controlled by physical chastisement. However, no prohibition was placed on their experiencing bodily pleasure or sexual feelings.

Despite the historical transition in the West from feudalism to capitalism, many of the features of the aristocratic family form may be seen to have been adopted by the ruling elite of the bourgeois class, both in Europe and America. Rayna Rapp, studying the contemporary class structure in America, was still able to identify an "upper class" family form of "multiple households ... filled with service workers rather than exclusively with kin and friends" (1982 p.182). Within such family configurations, women are not expected to undertake much domestic labour, but have the primary role of being 'on show' to the rest of the world. Their conspicuous 'leisure' acts both as a demonstration of the family's elite class position and as a means of constructing the idealised role that women are expected to perform in society at large:

> "They appear as wives and mothers, but it is not really their family roles but their class roles that dictate those appearances... They influence our cultural notations of what feminine and familial behaviour should be" (ibid. pp.182-3).

The peasant family form

In European culture, the peasant family form was defined by the intersection of the aristocratic definitions of 'family' and a material reality in which such a discrete organisation of family life under the control of a 'paterfamilias' was impossible, and communality in social and economic organisation was necessary. While Poster argues that, in a very real sense, "the village was the peasant's 'family'" (1978 p.185), nevertheless, "household heads in early modern England were held responsible for the discipline and the moral, spiritual and physical welfare of the members of their household" (Chaytor 1980 p.30). In certain non-European peasant cultures, the head of the household would not be the father but a male relative of the mother - an instance where patriarchal power is not actually vested in the biological father. Such a form of organisation, coupled with a system of descent that follows the maternal and not the paternal line, is to be found among the traditional organisation of certain Indian castes - for example the Bants (peasant cultivators) and the Mogers (fishermen) - see Carstairs and Kapur (1976).

The crucial factor which defines the structure of the peasant family is its role as a unit of economic production in which all family members participated. The household could consist, not just of a man's wife and children, but also of other relatives, such as a younger brother or aged parents, or even of hired workers. Here, as in the case of the aristocracy, marriage was based on hard economic considerations and not an ideology of romanticisation. Jordanova writes as follows:

> "In peasant cultures ... the *economic* participation of women and children was taken for granted... A wife or husband would therefore be chosen with such practicalities in mind, and a woman's skills, proven work capacity, hard earned dowry, even her proven fertility if labour were needed, were all important assets" (1981 p.43)

Although the status of women (and children) within the family did not reflect the full value of their contribution to the domestic economy, they nevertheless derived some degree of influence from this - a power base that was lost as rural economies were transformed from feudalism to capitalism (see Harris 1985 p.126). Nevertheless, differential rights of consumption within the family in no way reflected the real value of labour performed - only a hierarchy of status based on generation and gender. In relations to food, it was the "head of the family ... who takes the biggest pieces. He also takes the best" (Delphy 1984 p.45).

Given the full-time involvement of both parents and elder siblings in the labour process, Poster cites contemporary sources to suggest that, among peasant families, young children would have been left to their own devices as a partially autonomous peer-group, with older children guiding younger ones, and the whole under the collective control of the village community. In some communities, babies would be swaddled or given to another woman to wet-nurse. Therefore it seems reasonable to assume that parents (and, in particular, mothers) were not encouraged to form the sort of exclusive emotional bonds with their children that are characteristic of the bourgeois family form. As with the children of aristocratic families, there is no evidence that peasant children were prohibited from experiencing bodily gratification.

The Western bourgeois family form

The emergence of the bourgeois class in the late eighteenth century marked a radically new economic and ideological basis for the family. Whereas the aristocrat had simply sought to maintain his wealth through the smooth running of his estates, and spend the surplus on patronage and conspicuous consumption, the bourgeois sought to accumulate capital through a controlled and disciplined lifestyle. Such a degree of regulation could only be achieved by withdrawing the family from the public sphere, and so kinship relations took on a much narrower meaning. Whereas for the aristocrat, kinship implied a network of obligation and patronage, and for the peasant, a survival net of material support, no such notions of 'extended family' were relevant to the bourgeois, only a specified line of inheritance:

> "Kinship probably shifts from the lateral to the lineal. That is, resources (material and economic) are invested lineally, between parents, children and grandchildren, and not dispersed into larger networks" (Rapp 1982 p.181).

Aries (1973) links the historical emergence into popular discourse of the concept of 'childhood' with the emergence of the bourgeois class, between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Prior to this, childhood was not seen as a state of vulnerability, requiring special care and attention. This new ideology of 'childhood' also implied a new ideology of 'motherhood': the hitherto unheard-of assumption that a woman should devote herself full-time to the emotional nurturing of her child. This romanticisation of childrearing was parallelled by a

romanticisation of marriage, which was no longer seen as an arrangement based on economic practicality - although the ideal of romantic love actually contained within it the assumption that the woman would take on the full-time emotional care of her husband in return for being financially supported.

Such ideological shifts served to set up the bourgeois family as a privatised "haven in a heartless world", providing a sanctuary against the competitive maelstrom of capitalism (see Lasch 1977). However, feminists have rightly pointed out that it is only a 'haven' for men; it remains a place of feudal oppression for women who become constituted as full-time carers for children and men:

> "The family household is the place where men ... can expect comfort, service, care and loving attention from a wife, daughters or sisters. It is presented as the opposite to the world of work. But ... the family household is a large part of the world of work for women... For women, therefore, the family household can never be a refuge from the demand of work and society" (Gittins 1985 p.166).

The emergence of the bourgeois family was accompanied by a large body of ideological practice that exhorted families to conform to particular standards and ideals, much of which was devoted to subduing and denying the sexuality and independent will of women and children, and any manifestations of 'perverse' sexuality among men. Freud (1896) gives us some insight into the internal web of intense and repressed emotional relations that resulted from this. As Foucault (1981) points out, the effort that went into defining and denying sexuality, particularly in

relation to women and children, served only to emphasise its importance. For women, their simultaneous sexualisation and disqualification resulted in their "hystericisation": the conflation of their reproductive function with their supposed irrationality as part of a wider familial ideology that defined them as too fragile to take part in economic production:

> "Relations within the bourgeois family were regulated by strict sex-role divisions. The husband ... provided for the family... The wife, considered less rational and capable, concerned herself exclusively with the home" (Poster 1978 p.169).

The corollary of this new bourgeois ideology of domesticity, was that women came to be held responsible for all aspects of the health and well-being of the whole family - a position of enormous responsibility, but with little real power (see Graham 1984).

Although disenfranchised in terms of economics or ideological power, the claustrophobic intimacy and isolation of the bourgeois family rendered women most influential (but nevertheless exploited) at the level of emotionality. There is evidence that it has been women's mounting tension and frustration at this level that has led to their slow but significant rebellion against this construction of domesticity. For example, it has become increasingly acceptable for bourgeois women to go out to work, not out of economic necessity, but in order to relieve the boredom of their lives. Such jobs tend to be seen as a 'second income', allowing the woman a small emotional 'breathing space' while not threatening the economic primacy of the man's income, and hence the fundamental economic relations of the bourgeois household.

The working class family form

The form of the working class family arose out of the earlier peasant family form under the pervasive influence of bourgeois familial ideology and the (often contradictory) impact of capitalist relations of production. Instead of all members of the household working together as a single unit of economic production, each could be hired and fired separately as individual wage labourers. This new form of economic freedom fundamentally threatened patriarchal domination, as the labour of women and children was no longer under the control of the male head of household. This opened up a contradiction between the interests of the ruling class as capitalists (to exploit the wage labour of all family members) and as patriarchs (to maintain male domination). If this had allowed working class women to achieve an inadvertent degree of economic independence from men, this could easily have set up an ideological backlash of expectation among bourgeois women.

Patriarchal domination could only be reasserted at the level of ideology, and this at the expense of maximising capitalist exploitation. The ideologies of the bourgeois family, particularly the vulnerability of women and children and their 'proper place' being in the home, were promulgated as the universal ideal for all respectable families (see Davidoff and Hall 1987). Barrett identifies this spread of bourgeois family values in relation to the ideological shifts that underlay the apparently altruistic protective legislation which was introduced in the mid-nineteenth century to regulate and curtail the involvement of women and children in factory work:

> "This represented a material defeat for the interests of working women and, furthermore, one that is not simply explicable in terms of a proposed logic of capitalist development. It involved an assumption, shared by the labour movement amomg others, that the relegation of women to domesticity and childcare was natural and desirable... The eventual outcome was the product of an ideology of gender division that was incorporated into the capitalist division of labour rather than spontaneously generated by it (1980 p.138).

Another response to the politically dangerous instability of the working class family was increasing state involvement and intervention, from the Poor Laws through to the Welfare State. As Donzelot argues, under feudalism, full authority was delegated to the (male) household head to maintain order within his family "in keeping with the requirements of public order", whereas under capitalism, "the family appears as though colonised" (1980 pp.xx,103). A whole external technology of advice, guidance and counselling is seen to be established, through the institutions of medicine, public health and social services, for supervising, managing and "policing" family life, particularly among the working classes. As with the bourgeois family, it was now the woman who was held accountable on a day-to-day basis for all aspects of family life (although the man retained all legitimated power and authority). Thus, more specifically, it has tended to be working class *women* who have been policed by the various state apparatuses.

From the late nineteenth century onwards, the family structure of the skilled working class tended to diverge from that of the manual working

class, as some men were able to earn a 'family wage' sufficient for them to place the rest of their family within the bourgeois ideology of domesticity. However, Barrett argues that, for the majority of working class families, their construction in relation to this bourgeois 'ideal' has been in contradiction with their actual material experience:

> "At an ideological level the bourgeoisie ... secured a hegemonic definition of family life... as properly organised through a male breadwinner with financially dependent wife and children... Yet there is a disjunction between the pervasiveness of this ideology ... and the actual household structure of the proletariat in which it exists. Few working class households have historically been organised around dependence on a male 'breadwinning' wage and the earnings of other family members have usually been essential to maintain the household" (1980 p.204).

Although constrained by this ideology to keep up the appearance of autonomy, many working class families have relied on a network of material inter-dependence. As a way of resolving this contradiction, men would generally uphold the image of autonomy within the outside communities of work and leisure (e.g. the pub), while it was left to women, behind the scenes, to borrow and exchange the means of survival. From this arises Rayna Rapp's crucial distinction between the family organisation of the "settled living" (or respectable) working class, where the normative bourgeois ideal can actually be achieved, from that of the "hard living" working class where this is practically impossible:

> "Given the state of the job market, welfare legislation and segregated slum housing ... these people are essentially living

> below socially necessary reproduction costs. They therefore reproduce themselves by spreading out the aid and the risks involved in daily life... Families do not exhibit the radical split between 'private, at home' and 'public, at work' found in the families of the stable working class... There can be no privatisation when survival may depend on rapid circulation of limited resources" (1982 pp.177,179).

In Bethnal Green of the 1950s, Young and Wilmott found a working class family form that still failed to conform exactly to the bourgeois ideal. An extended support network of female kin was still much in evidence, with nearly a third of married women choosing to live on the same street or block of flats as their mother. For the majority of married women, the extended family of grandmother, daughters and grandchildren was very much a reality: most had seen their mother in the previous 24 hours. The men still had their social life based around work and pub, but these were thought to be declining in importance. However, the bourgeois construction of childhood had begun to hold sway, with family life becoming increasingly home-centred and children becoming idealised and being given preferential treatment - a shift which was showing signs of undermining the overt privileges of the head of the household, as shown in the following interview:

> "We're different with our boy. We make more of a mate of him. When I was a kid Dad always had the best of everything. Now it's the children who get the best of it. If there's one pork chop left, the kiddy gets it" (1986 p.28).

Breaking the mould: non-normative family forms

The forgoing models of family relations may be seen as having a reality, both in the sense of describing typical modes of material and emotional organisation, and also in the sense of describing specific ideological constructions of how a 'family' *should be* within a particular historical, cultural and class context. Clearly, many actual living arrangements have not coincided exactly with such normative models of organisation. Many of these, while not adhering to the norm, may not have challenged it in any way. Such idiosyncratic arrangements would be understood, both by the participants themselves, and by the community at large, as appropriate responses to unavoidable circumstances. For example, a bereavement could leave a mother in the position of bringing up a family on her own. Despite the absence of an actual father, such a family unit would continue to be organised around (and hence reaffirm) the existence of such a position: it would be identified as a 'lack' within familial discourse. The woman could be seen as (temporarily) having to be both 'mother' *and* 'father' to her children.

Although the organisation of such a family unit may reproduce some elements of the patriarchal norm, research on 'women-headed' single parent families has shown a significant 'flattening' of internal hierarchical arrangements (see Weiss 1979; Cashion 1982). Children are typically given more responsibility for themselves and mothers more often negotiate decisions with them rather than simply imposing their authority. Interestingly, this would seem to lead to a greater sense of empowerment for mothers:

> "In contrast to the two-parent family where mother and father establish a hierarchy with themselves at the top (father a bit more at the top than mother) and the children at the bottom, the single parent family typically functions as a consensus arrangement... The consultative process with her children gives [the mother] a greater sense of power and competence than she would have as the wife of someone who not only dominates the children but her as well" (Goodrich et al 1988 p.73).

Women who form single parent families *out of choice* (for example by refusing to submit to violence and abuse from a partner) may be seen to pose a much more fundamental threat to the dominance of patriarchal family forms. This is most significant (leading to the strongest ideological backlash) in the instance of lesbian mothers:

> "Society's view of heterosexual single mothers ... is that there is always the comforting assumption that a conventional relationship with a man is a possibility, and that the traditional social and economic relationships between men and women in society are not therefore really being contravened. Society cannot make such comforting assumptions about lesbians, who have challenged the conventional ideology of the family and rejected the cultural norm, by deliberately choosing social, economic, emotional and sexual independence from men" (Steel 1990 pp.10-11).

Evidence of the backlash may be found in the systematic descrimination that lesbian mothers have faced in the courts in relation to custody decisions (see Rights Of Women 1986). The relative isolation of women in such positions can lead to a lack of 'power together' that may be

compounded by their being placed at considerable economic disadvantage due to the lack of state or workplace childcare provision. Through the impact of such external pressures, those households that effectively reject prevailing familial ideology are forced to experience themselves as being 'deviant' or a 'social problem' within prevailing discourses - as lacking the all-important heterosexual patriarch that would make their organisation 'complete':

> "Because the [bourgeois] family is deemed the *only* organisation in which to live, all those who live outside it are either odd, abnormal or, in the worst cases, social outcasts... The widowed ... are largely ignored ... because they occupy their place outside the family only reluctantly and certainly blamelessly. But for the rest of these people - homosexuals, lesbians, unsupported mothers and so on ... the conclusion which is imposed on them and with which they have to live, is that they have *failed*... Not only are they outside the family because they threaten it, they were until recently, outside the *law*" (Comer 1974 pp.207-8).

To some degree, local gay and lesbian communities have been able to construct their own alternative 'norms' of domestic organisation in opposition to the hegemony of patriarchal family forms (although, at times, still using the terms of the dominant discourse). As Goodrich et al note, "Some lesbian communities may expect couples to be monogamous, while other communities may hold monogamy to be oppressive" (1988 p.144). Research has shown that, despite the ever-present availability of patriarchal 'blueprints' for constructing relationships (e.g. 'active'/'passive' or 'masculine'/'feminine' roles), gay people have

shown surprisingly little tendency to conform to such stereotypes (see Barrett 1980 p.65).

Perhaps the most concerted attempt to construct an alternative family form has been the kibbutz movement. This achieved a shift, in both material and ideological arrangements, from a traditionally tight organisation of kinship/co-residence to a communal organisation of living and working, with a professionalisation of child-rearing (see Bettelheim 1969; Tiger and Shepher 1975). As Goldthorpe argues, the kibbutzim were established with the intention (if not always the practice) of equal rights and work responsibilities for all men and women without any form of class distinction:

> "[In] the communal dining room ... cooking, serving, and clearing away were done by men and women alike on a rota basis, and there was no individual shopping for food... Rewards and sustenance were collective and shared among all kibbutz members, not individual and effort- or enterprise-related. So no woman depended on any man; her sustenance was hers by right as a commune member" (1987 p.237).

In many respects, the kibbutz may be seen as a family-community, but it differs form those in traditional societies in its explicit rejection of patriarchal and class oppression. This has resulted in significant differences in the way personal subjectivity has been constructed for those children brought up in the kibbutz, compared to those, for example, brought up within the patriarchal capitalism of North America:

> "If intense group ties discourage individuation, neither do they breed human isolation, asocial behaviour or other forms of social

disorganisations that plague modern man in competitive society" (Bettelheim 1969 p.262).

The kibbutz also differs from a traditional family-community in that many (but not all) of the adult members of a kibbutz would be part of close monogamous partnerships which would constitute their closest emotional relationships. However, contradictions have emerged between the principles of communality and egalitarianism, and the experience of intimacy within conventionally privatised relationships, resulting in "a shift from socialist ideals" (Barrett and McIntosh 1982 p.53).

Other rejections of the 'nuclear' family form have tended to be more ad hoc and not part of any organised mass movement sufficiently powerful to bring about a fundamental shift in normative ideologies. While some new forms of household organisation have been based on an explicit critique, others have simply arisen out of individual and collective choices. Within the commune movement of the 1960s and 1970s, radical alternatives to the nuclear family were tried out. Although there was some challenge to certain aspects of conventional family life - for instance more open sexual relationships and more sharing of childcare - they generally failed to challenge the fundamentally patriarchal organisation of family relations. It has only been with the emergence of gay or pro-feminist households that this issue has begun to be addressed.

In practice, it has not proved easy to set up alternative living units that are both stable, unoppressive and intimate - whether based around heterosexual or gay relationships (or both). Problems have arisen due to the ever-present pressure of conventional ideology (for example, as

the children mix with others at the local school) and the always available 'easy option' of opting back in to a more 'normal' (i.e. patriarchal) family structure. Furthermore, given that each participant will probably have internalised large elements of patriarchal ideology from their family of origin, it is not surprising that there is a tendency either to reproduce such relations as soon as close relationships are established in a new household, or for there to be confusion and uncertainty as people attempt intimacy without any mutually recognised 'conventions' of emotional relations:

> "We have become very good at establishing ... relatively relaxed households where all the gendered roles and patriarchal expectations have been banished... But it is ... [in] dealing with emotionality, our needs to be needed, our desires for autonomy ... dependency, commitment, vulnerability, closeness, caring ... that the dynamics of our new alternatives founder" (Clark 1983 p.174).

While these same issues can cause tension and sometimes break-up within a 'normal' family unit, their impact is limited by the pre-existence of conventional sets of beliefs and practices by which many 'difficult' areas of emotionality are suppressed and the mores of 'family life' sustained. By contrast, new family forms must, as it were, construct themselves from scratch, so that all such issues have to be confronted directly within a social context that undermines and denies their legitimacy. Thus, break-up may be more frequent, even though, in some ways, the degree of internal tension may actually be less than for a conventional family unit - as it may be constructed around a lesser degree of patriarchal oppression.

Theoretical Perspectives on Familial Organisation

From our overview of different configurations of familial relations, the picture that emerges is one of great variation in what may be meant by 'family'. Nevertheless, in any given context, some specific set of arrangements may be seen to exist which governs the organisation of material interdependence, intimate relationships and the upbringing of children. This form of organisation may be seen to be a crucial basis for individual and collective survival, one which may be legitimised by a particular set of practices and discourses within a given social formation. However, such survival may be at the cost of accepting and reproducing certain patterns of inequality and oppression among family members. For each, 'the family' may organise their participation in the wage and domestic labour processes, their rights in relation to consumption, their experience of intimacy and the provision of physical and emotional care - all in ways that may be profoundly unequal or exploitative. In such ways, the institution of 'the family' can be crucial in constructing the personal subjectivities of children (and in continually reconstructing the personal subjectivities of adult family members).

Any familial organisation may be seen to comprise a set of material, discursive and emotional relations that may be oppressive or empowering, or some combination of both. 'The family', in any specific historical and cultural context, may be seen to be organised by, and a site of operation of, the power struggles of gender, class and race that are specific to that social formation. It may also be seen to be

constructed in relation to other state and civil institutions, modes of production and prevailing ideologies within that social formation. Nevertheless, we have seen the degree to which it has been possible to break away from ideologically prescribed family forms - although, as we saw with the kibbutz and feminist households, it is in no way straightforward to construct a secure domestic unit that does not reproduce any of the oppression and tension of more traditional family forms. Nevertheless, as female-headed (single parent) families have demonstrated, it is possible to develop a familial organisation that is significantly less structured around 'power over' and more around 'power together', one in which both children and parents receive a greater degree of respect and recognition.

In general, the external relations of 'the family' may be seen to be determined by the prevailing relations of class exploitation and racial domination. A family may typically be seen to be organised as a unit whose collective class and racial position determines whether all family members are able to oppress, or are subject to the oppression of, the members of other families. For example, all members of a bourgeois family unit are placed in a position of power over those who are organised as part of a working class family unit. Similarly, those who belong to a 'white' family are located in a position of potential domination over others who are part of a 'black' family. (Mixed race or mixed class families constitute interesting special cases in which they may simultaneously be organised on the basis of two somewhat contradictory sets of relations). External relations of oppression may also have a determining effect on the ways in which internal relations

may be oppressive (see Barrett and McIntosh 1980, 1985) or, conversely, supportive and empowering in enabling family members to resist their oppression by collective struggle (see Humphries 1977, Carby 1982).

Familial relations are determined by (and actively reproduce) wider structures of patriarchy within the social formation. On the one hand, specific practices within family life may maintain and reinforce the authority of the 'paterfamilias' within a particular society. On the other, the question of who is and is not empowered to 'represent' the family outside in its material and discursive transactions may, in turn, be seen to structure inequalities of power within the internal relations of the family. The manner in which women, children, gay and older people are discriminated against within the external relations of the social formation (for example, in the job market) has a determining effect on the degree to which a man is in a position to dominate women, children and other men within a familial organisation. As we have seen, the degree to which family life is dominated by patriarchal organisation would seem to vary considerably, with women in some social formations having the opportunity to organise outside the family and exert power via the public sphere, while, in others, women may only be powerful within familial networks of exchange and support, or are effectively contained within the domestic sphere.

In the next sections, I will review how critical theory offers ways of understanding the processes that underlie the various phenomenal forms of family life at the levels of material, ideological and emotional relations.

Material relations

Within a specific social formation, the institution of the family may be seen to organise certain economic and physical relations between men, women and children. These may comprise some combination of exploitation or support, domination or empowerment. The family may organise aspects of economic production and consumption, and also of the reproduction of labour power and the care of those who are not economically active. Furthermore, it may regulate the transmission of wealth or other privileges between generations, often resulting in the perpetuation of inequalities both between families and between different family members. As well as embodying such economic inequalities, a family form may also be organised on the basis of relations of physical force and coercion.

As we have seen, the bourgeois family form has been organised on the basis of collective economic 'power over' families of subordinate classes, in particular, the accumulation, control and transmission of wealth (and other privileges). As Marx and Engels argue:

> "On what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family, based? On capital, on private gain. In its completely developed form this family exists only among the bourgeoisie ... [and] will vanish ... with the vanishing of capital" (Marx 1977 p.234).

It may also be seen to be constructed around the exercise of economic 'power over' women by men, both in terms of day-to-day organisation and in terms of the passing on of wealth and other privileges down the male line. Wives are firmly restricted from occupying significant positions of economic power in their own right outside the home (any paid

employment being seen as more of an 'interest' or a 'hobby' than as an economic status in its own right), but they are expected to do any domestic labour that is required (although working class women may be employed as cleaners and nannies to cover some of this work). As bourgeois women have no right to remuneration in line with the quality or value of the domestic labour they perform, they are dependent on making a 'good' marriage in order to achieve financial security. Thus, while husband and wife may ostensibly share the same standard of living, this masks an underlying division in real economic power and their security is largely illusory:

> "Even though a marriage with a man from the capitalist class can raise a woman's standard of living, it does not make her a member of that class. She herself does not own the means of production... In the vast majority of cases, wives of bourgeois men whose marriage ends must earn their own living as wage-workers. They therefore become in practice ... the proletarians that they essentially were" (Delphy 1984 pp.70-1).

Under feudalism, the household constituted the primary unit of economic exploitation: in order to achieve survival, people without land had little choice but to offer their services to the head of an existing household in exchange just for subsistence. It was Marx who identified how the economic coherence of the peasant family unit was being shattered by the logic of capitalist economic production in which men, women and children could be hired (and exploited) as separate units of labour power. In this way, the former patriarchal organisation of the

family had become irrelevant at an economic level as the labour market had become individualised:

> "Modern industry, by assigning as it does an important part in the process of production, outside the domestic sphere, to women, to young persons, and to children of both sexes, creates a new economic foundation for ... the family and ... relations between the sexes" (Marx 1970 p.490).

However, as we have seen, under the guise of "protective" legislation, women were systematically denied the equality of opportunity in the job market which would have enabled them to be fully economically independent of men. Furthermore, whatever had happened in the workplace, capitalist production had not led to any dissolution of patriarchal relations within the family, in terms of the exploitation of women's domestic labour. It has been materialist feminist analyses that have analysed a second mode of production operating in parallel to that of capitalism: a domestic mode of production governed by neo-feudal power relations. Women (and sometimes children) are generally required to undertake whatever 'housework' or physical caring is needed within the family, without any right to material or other recognition for the services they provide (see Oakley 1974, 1976; Finch and Groves 1983). As Annette Kuhn points out, for both bourgeois and proletarian families, "The marriage contract gives the husband the right of access to his wife's labour in reproducing his labour power and by bearing and rearing his children" (Kuhn and Wolpe 1978 p.56). Delphy takes the argument a stage further in explaining the precise relations of the patriarchal exploitation of women's labour power within families:

> "Domestic services and child-rearing ... are excluded from the realm of exchange and consequently have no *value*. They are unpaid. Whatever women receive in return is independent of the work which they perform because it is not handed out in exchange for that work (i.e. as a wage to which their work entitles them) but rather as a gift. The husband's only obligation ... is to provide for his wife's basic needs, in other words he maintains her labour power" (1984 p.60).

Due to their continued involvement in the domestic mode of production, women in working class families are not liberated from familial oppression just through their participation in the capitalist wage labour process. Instead, subject to the combined forces of patriarchy and capitalism, the typical working class family has been reconstructed as a single economic unit, with the man as the 'breadwinner' while the wife doubles as 'housewife' and 'secondary' wage earner. Women's participation in the wage labour market is thus unequal - their work opportunities are defined by what they can fit around their domestic 'obligations' to husband and children (see Close and Collins 1985).

Although, as Oakley (1974) showed, women currently tend to work for longer hours overall than men (paid employment and housework), their disposable wealth or rights of consumption do not reflect this. While it is often considered legitimate for men to retain a part of their wages for personal consumption, a woman's earnings are conventionally considered as part of the "housekeeping", to be spent on herself only when (or if) the rest of the family is properly provided for (see

Barrett and McIntosh 1982; Land 1983). Among peasant families, Delphy (1984) found differentials in terms of the consumption of food, depending on gender and age, that were continually reinforced in day-to-day family rituals and were underpinned by an elaborate system of "punishments and threats". The research of Charles and Kerr (1987) has shown that Delphy's conclusion is equally applicable to working class families. The privileges accorded to the head of the household in the respect clearly do not bear any relationship to the quantity of physical work performed - simply to his status. Indeed, much research on family poverty has shown how it is women who consistently 'go without' in order that men and children (usually in that order) can have the greater share of whatever resources are to be distributed (Pahl 1983; Graham 1984; Brannen and Wilson 1987).

A wider perspective on what constitutes the material aspects of familial organisation must include, not just its structuring in terms of economic inequalities, but also on the basis of systematic physical coercion. Patriarchy may be seen, not just as a mode of economic exploitation, but also as an organisation of social relations on the basis of the potential for physical force. Men's competitive relations with other men are mediated by the potential for systematic violence (e.g. the role of the police and armed forces) and this underpins their structural domination of women and children (although, in these instances, such violence may be sexualised). Furthermore, men who suffer abuse and domination at the hands of other men may displace their aggression on to 'softer' targets within the family. Thus men's potential for violence

towards women and children becomes part of the structuring of 'normal' family relationships:

> "These power relations include the tension and stress, the psychological violence, that comes with the anticipation of the arrival home of the 'absent' father... Violent actions may be available as part of men's repertoire at all times, but are most used at times of particular threat... Frustration and anger at possible or potential loss of power in one sphere may be acted upon in another sphere of relationship, where there may be less resistance" (Hearn 1990 pp.69-70).

Within a patriarchal social formation, such violence is allowed to be seen as normal, and policing and legal apparatuses are structured in a way that does not provide adequate protection for potential victims. This is legitimated by the ideology of domestic 'privacy'. While it is true that women and children often receive inadequate protection on the street (and thereby are intimidated into remaining at home or under the protection of their family), the degree of legal protection is actually far less within the home. Assaults against children in the form of physical punishments (from both parents, but typically more violent from fathers) are generally accepted and occur with greatest frequency against young children who are least able to defend themselves (for a fuller discussion of the extent of violence against women and children, see Hotaling et al 1988). Although, as a result of women's political struggles over the last century, certain forms of domestic assault are now covered by the same legal framework as they would have been if they had taken place outside the family (although women have only recently

received any protection against rape by their husbands in English law), such violence and intimidation towards women and children can still sometimes be redefined by the Police as "domestic disputes" into which they are reluctant to intervene.

Patriarchal control over familial relations through the sanctioning of violence is particularly evident in the structuring of sexual relations between wife and husband. Such physical 'mastery' can be used to enforce control over women's sexual behaviour, with the husband exerting 'rights of ownership' over his wife's sexuality and, in particular, her fertility (see Dobash and Dobash 1977 p.438). Even if a man has never been violent or threatened violence to his family, the combination of, typically, his greater physical strength and the absence of any proper outside protection, means that familial relations (and particularly sexual relations) are continually organised on the basis of the fear that even this man might, if sufficiently 'provoked', turn violent and harm other family members:

> "Not all women are physically battered, but because of the nature of marriage, most men have the power to batter 'their' woman if they so wish. Feminists therefore regard battering as the extreme end of a continuum of oppression suffered by all women to a greater or lesser extent depending on their class, marital status or degree of economic dependence on a man" (Binney 1981 p.124).

Ideological aspects

Familial ideology, as with any other form of ideology, may be seen as a means of domination by ruling groups, but also as a means of resistance by groups that are oppressed. It may be seen to comprise "a number of important and culturally specific beliefs about sexuality, reproduction, parenting and the power relationships between age groups and between the sexes" (Gittins 1985 p.70). Any concept of 'family' may be seen to be constructed at an intersection between the operation of (and resistance to) imperialist, capitalist and patriarchal ideologies:

> "The assumptions made today about the natural-and-proper organisation of family life can be shown to have arisen in particular historical circumstances. The definitions of motherhood, childhood, fatherhood, the representation of the home as a 'haven in a heartless world', have been forged out of veritable ideological and legal campaigns, and are subject to constant renegotiation as needs and circumstances change" (Harris 1985 p.122).

Actual families exist in a dual relationship with familial ideology, both being determined by, and (to a greater or lesser extent) living out, this specified set of beliefs, understandings and practices, in the way that the household is organised. Such an ideal of 'family' may be in direct contradiction to the imperatives of material or emotional existence (for example, survival may depend on pooling resources and sharing emotional support among wider networks). It may proscribe the very form of organisation that people desire to construct for themselves (for example, heterosexist familial ideology may prevent lesbian or gay

living arrangements being seen as 'families' at all). Nevertheless, participation in prevailing discursive structures requires people to uphold such an 'ideal' family as the 'norm' against which their own arrangement may be judged - a norm which should be aspired to, if not always achieved. Within an oppressive social formation, such a norm may specify patterns of inequality and repression in the internal and external relations of the household:

> "The family is the normative, correct way in which people get recruited into households. It is through families that people enter into productive, reproductive and consumption relations. The two genders enter them differently" (Rapp 1982 p.170).

It is crucialy in relation to this 'ideal' of family (and not just their actual experience of material and emotional relations) that children are inducted into their class and racial identities, and into the attitudes and expectations that attach to their gender and age (see Morgan 1985 p.98). This 'ideal' existing within the discourse of their own living unit, and also in the external discourses in which they may be subjected (at school, on the street, with neighbours etc.), may be determining irrespective of their individual experience of how their own living unit operates. Even children brought up in gay, mixed race or pro-feminist households will still have to construct their identity, attitudes and expectations in relation to the dominant norms. They will inevitably learn that the absence of a 'father figure', or the existence of inter-racial or same sex relationships, defines their living unit as 'deviant', even though their own experience of this unit may be very positive.

From the Marxist perspectives of Gramsci and Althusser, the institution of 'the family' may be seen to be constructed outside the direct control of the State or the ruling class, in a similar way to other ideological "apparatuses" within civil society. As with other institutions of civil society, it may also be a place of organised resistance, representing "not only be the stake but also the site of class struggle" (Althusser 1971 p.147). Under the social relations of imperialism, and both feudalism and capitalism, the institution of 'the family' has acted as a means of guaranteeing the inheritance of male members of ruling groups (and allied group fractions). It has been organised around a set of ideological concepts, such as legitimacy, lineage, and racial 'purity', that have enabled wealth and power to be passed from one generation of white ruling class men to another. For example, at the time that divorce was made legal in 1857, adultery was seen as having quite separate meanings for men and for women. As the Lord Chancellor stated to the House of Lords:

> "A wife might, without any loss of caste, and possibly with reference to the interests of her children, or even of her husband, condone an act of adultery on the part of the husband, but the husband could not condone a similar act on behalf of a wife. No-one would venture to suggest that a husband could possibly do so ... for ... the adultery of the wife might be the means of palming spurious offspring upon the husband, while adultery of the husband could have no such effect with regard to the wife" (quoted in Walker 1990 p.3).

The ideology of patriarchy and 'familial' ideologies are peculiarly intertwined. While the social relations of patriarchy may be seen to be

operating in other spheres, it is in the ideological relations of the family that they are perhaps most evident. It is primarily patriarchal ideology that structures the internal relations of family life: it legitimates (and makes appear 'natural') the exploitation and intimidation of women, children and older people by adult men, and the suppression of certain modes of emotional and sexual expression by particular family members. Although the specific ideologies of heterosexism and homophobia may be located within many institutions of the social formation, their operation is perhaps most marked in relation to 'the family'. Under prevailing patriarchal social relations, women are defined as the sole objects of male sexual desire. This not only subjects women in a subordinated position as men's sexual 'servants', but also excludes the possibility of constructing legitimate and recognisable 'familial' relations around lesbian or gay partnerships (with or without children).

As well as being organised on the basis of heterosexist ideology, the family also serves as a crucial location for its reproduction. It is not easy for children to have the experience of growing up within the material, emotional and ideological relations of a lesbian or gay 'family', since such an entity is denied any legitimate existence within a patriarchal social formation. Thus, almost all children, whatever the (covert) sexual preferences of their parents, will grow up in families that are overtly structured along heterosexist lines. Over and above this, even for the small minority of children whose parents resist the dominant ideology and are open about having gay relationships, this remains subjugated to a dominant ideology which defines these as deviant

and antithetical to values of 'normal' family life. In this way, within the current social formation, family relations are constituted (and desire is distorted) such that only heterosexual partnerships are allowed to emerge and be seen by children to be 'normal' or 'natural'.

The set of ideological relations that comprises 'the family' within any context may include very contradictory elements - contradictions within and between the relations of imperialism, capitalism and patriarchy. This may be seen in the political discourses that have taken place around idealised concepts of 'the family'. As Barrett and McIntosh argue, the institution of 'the family' has become "the focal point for a set of ideologies that resonate throughout society. The imagery of idealised family life permeates the fabric of social existence and provides a highly significant, dominant and unifying complex of social meaning" (1982 p.29). A "war of position" has taken place in which forces of both the Left and the Right have attempted to employ notions of 'family' as part of either liberatory or repressive political struggles. Lasch (1977), coming from a socialist position, coined the phrase "haven in a heartless world" so as to link the signification of 'the family' to values of care and collectivism, values which stood in direct contradiction to those of competition and individual self-interest which underpinned the 'outside world' of capitalist social relations. Within the political arena, a similar articulation of 'the family' may be found in a speech by the former Labour Party leader, James Callaghan (22/5/1978):

> "The family is the place where we care for each other, where we practise consideration for one another. Caring families are the basis of a society that cares" (quoted in Morgan 1985 p.59).

However, Lasch's idealisation of 'the family' was also taken over by the Right (for example, see Mount 1983). This idealised 'family' is constructed as 'natural' and 'universal', despite the obvious fact that "the ideological construction of the family as the antithesis of the cash-nexus could only refer to a capitalist society" (Barrett and McIntosh 1982 p.34). The supposedly innate caring and altruism of 'the family' is set in opposition to the impersonal interference of 'the state'. Such a meaning of 'family' is used to underpin attacks on any communal or state provision of welfare.

Intersecting with this struggle over 'the family' within capitalist ideology is a parallel struggle within the ideological relations of patriarchy. Feminists have argued that the above representations of 'family' within the discourse of both the Left and the Right are fundamentally oppressive to women in that they have tended to ignore and gloss over the fact that it is women who conventionally do all the work of caring in the family: "It has generally been assumed that what is good for the family (read: husband) is good for all (read: wife and children)" (Goodrich et al 1988 p.5). Thus, while the conventional family may represent a 'haven' for working men, it represents a place of hard and unrewarded labour for women.

Ruling class discourses on the sanctity of 'the family' represent an overlapping of capitalist and patriarchal interests, often with the emphasis on the latter. An example of this tendency may be found in the launch of the Conservative Family Campaign, which sought both to reduce the powers of the state to encroach on the authority of 'the father' in family life, and to (re-)subordinate women by using 'the family' as an explicit vehicle to undermine the limited gains that women have made in the field of employment:

> "The Conservative Family Campaign aims to put the father back at the head of the family table... Years of militant feminism and harmful legislation like the Equal Opportunities Act have undermined the clear Biblical concept of the father... Twenty years of a woman's life devoted to nurturing the family far outweigh twenty years of taking a man's job - particularly when there are not enough men's jobs around" (Webster-Gardiner 1986).

Such attempts to shift the signification of 'family', not only serve to reconstruct conventional households as more effective institutions of repression, but also to deny any legitimacy to any non-normative arrangements, such as "homosexual and lesbian couplings" (ibid). As Gerald Howarth of the Conservative "No Turning Back" group writes:

> "Instead of ... trying to accommodate unconventional lifestyles, the nation's spiritual leaders should unashamedly extol the virtues of normal family life" (Community Care 10/1/91).

Such promotion of the supposed sanctity and naturalness of one particular family form has been used consistently to underpin an ideology of homophobia and to legitimate attacks on gay rights.

As Barrett and McIntosh argue, a political struggle needs to be waged to disarticulate the signifier 'the family' from the New Right discourse of 'family values'. Despite attempts by the Left to subvert this discourse, for example by translating discourses of class inequality into those of 'family poverty', these too may be seen to fall into the trap of accepting the conventional idealisation of 'the family', and hence glossing over the material inequalities faced by women (and both children and older people) within the family unit. They conclude:

> "Neither the socialist nor the feminist tradition has yet developed the political consensus on the family that we would need in order to persue a struggle with the right" (1982 p.17).

It has come to be realised that somehow abolishing the institution of 'the family' would not, of itself, end patriarchal and heterosexist oppression. Instead the debate has moved into a more subtle and long-term struggle to change the nature of 'the family' at the level of ideology. In searching for the terms with which to mount such a struggle within ideology, Barrett and McIntosh propose the promotion of "choice" (a signifier that has until now been appropriated by the Right):

> "We should work for immediate changes that will increase the possibilities of *choice* so that alternatives to the existing favoured patterns of family life become realistically available and desirable" (ibid p.134).

Emotional aspects

It is within the context of familial relations that, typically, the most intense and long-lasting emotional relationships are constructed: those of 'love' and 'care'. It is within the specific institution of 'the family', as constructed within a particular social formation, that sexual and non-sexual intimate relations between women, men and children are organised and regulated. Furthermore, it is most crucially within this institution that emotional subjectivity is constructed and reconstructed. As we have seen earlier, it is the construction and maintenance of emotional relationships within the organisation of non-normative family forms that has proved to be most problematic - where new systems of regulation have to be negotiated in a context that is not (at least to the same extent) dictated by unequal power relations.

As Poster has suggested, it is only with the emergence of the bourgeois family form, with its accompanying romanticisation of a family ideal, that emotional relations appear central, rather than incidental, to the organisation of family life. This is not to say that intense emotional bonds did not develop in peasant and aristocratic family forms (there is much evidence that they did), just that marriage was, first and foremost, constructed as an alliance of property or labour power. However, central to the bourgeois family ideal is the belief in a marriage based on "love", an apparently free choice by a woman and a man that they wish to spend their life together *for emotional reasons*. Such an ideology or romantic love may also be defining for gay people who choose to form monogamous relationships. As feminist theorists have

shown, the emotional bargain is actually rather more complex than it appears in relation to heterosexual relationships. Women and men enter marriage on a profoundly unequal basis in terms of material and economic relations, and this can serve to reinforce any power imbalance in the organisation of emotional relations, although the relation between oppressive processes operating at different levels is complex:

> "Women have been put in a position of being economically dependent within patriarchy, but the relationship between economic dependency and emotional dependency is not straightforward. Although this is not usually made explicit within the relationship, men's dependency needs are most often met within marriage and their emotional worries are processed by their wives. No equivalent place exists for women" (Eichenbaum and Orbach 1985 p.86-7).

Thus women's unequal economic opportunities within family organisation place them in the somewhat contradictory position of feeling dependent on men, but actually being depended on by men (for the 'servicing' of their emotional needs). As Graham argues, "for many women, being a dependent is synonymous not with receiving care, but with giving it" (1983 p.24). What men achieve, in the patriarchal marital relationship, is to be able to depend on their wives for emotional support (a continuation of the mother-son emotional configuration), while, at the same time, being in a position of emotional power over their caregiver (an almost punitive reversal of this configuration).

This contradictory relationship is maintained partly through men's power base at material and ideological levels, but also through the

differential construction of their emotional subjectivities. We saw earlier how women's and men's emotional subjectivity is constructed in profoundly different ways within the current social formation. Women's personality adaptations are likely leave them far more confident transacting at the level of feeling rather than thinking, while men tend to take on the reverse adaptations. This can lead to extreme polarisation within the marital relationship, a polarisation that can also be exacerbated by their subjection within external structures:

> "It is not simply that she is emotional and he is rational; they push each other to the extreme. Emotionality becomes hysteria; rationality becomes obsessiveness. Her capacity for intimacy becomes hostile dependency; his cool reserve becomes belligerent distancing... Whereas society applauds the obsessive for his thoroughness, his attention to details, his obedience to the letter of the law, and his calm objectivity, it pathologises the hysteric for her flightiness, her generalisations, her emotionalism and her subjectivity. He, the good worker, makes up our workforce. She, the patient, makes up our caseload" (Goodrich et al 1988 pp.86-7).

Furthermore, whereas men's emotionality is structured around the concepts of phallic 'power over' and bourgeois autonomy, women's emotionality is constructed around connectedness and deferment to the desire of others. Just as she would have seen her mother's subjectivity split into "Good" and "Bad" objects, so a woman will tend to construct her own subjectivity in terms that mirror the same split objectification: on the one hand, taking on the position of "Florence Nightingale" or "Superwoman" (or perhaps an idealised view of her own

mother) and, on the other, that of a "Nag" or a "Slag" (or an image of her own mother as dangerous and overwhelming).

Unable to ask directly for their needs to be met, women will tend, in marriage, to seek the same sort of indirect caring relationship that they may have experienced with their mothers - constructing themselves as open and vulnerable in the expectation that their partners will sense and respond intuitively to their feelings and needs. However, such sensitivity and intuitive caring will tend not to be forthcoming, and their vulnerability will not be fully reciprocated. As we have seen, men typically construct their emotional subjectivity so as to avoid any openness or vulnerability: they switch between being holding back and acting out, either containing their feelings or taking them out on others - particularly through the domination of women (patriarchally constructed 'phallic' desire rather than any open expression of their own intimate feelings of love or distress). This maintains men in a position of 'power over' women at an emotional level.

In order to sustain any connectedness in the relationship (and have any of her emotional needs met at all) a women has to do all the emotional 'work', using her intuition to anticipate what her man *might* be feeling, and looking after his feelings without his even having to own them or ask for support. In this way, women are set up not just to be the carer, but also to act as the one in the relationship that has to 'contain' and express the more intimate feelings that are incompatible with the construction of male subjectivity, whether they be those of affection, or of weakness and distress. As Jean Baker Miller argues,

such "parts of human experience are so necessary that they cannot be projected far away. One must *have* them nearby, even if one can still deny *owning* them. These are the special areas delegated to women" (1988 pp.47-8). Thus, the bond of 'love' between women and men, upon which the bourgeois family is supposedly founded, masks an underlying inequality at an emotional level, with the woman having to take responsibility for the emotional maintenance of the relationship, while deferring to her husband's authority - a crucial instance of women's experience of having responsibility without power.

The final paradox of inequality at the level of emotionality is the subjective sense of power that this gives to each gender. Women will generally experience that, through their openness of emotional expression, they are rendering themselves powerless and defenceless in relation to their husbands who may continue to "Be Strong" and hold back their feelings (or act them out on others). However, paradoxically, women's openness with emotion may be percived by men as a threat. Women's greater competance at transacting at this level means that, if open interactions do occur, men feel themselves to be at a relative disadvantage. Unused to owning this aspect of their personal weakness, men will tend to reconstruct the situation in terms of a projection. They picture themselves being in danger of being overwhelmed by the unconstrained emotionality of the woman, constructing her, once again, as the familiar "Bad" object - "Witch" or "Whore".

Let us now turn to the power relations between parents and children at the level of emotionality. Alice Miller has argued that, although

European child-rearing practices have changed over the past two centuries, the fundamentally oppressive principles underlying them have not altered. It is understood as the 'duty' of parents to impose a (patriarchal) power hierarchy under which children's rights are systematically over-ruled. Various tactics, from "physically maiming, exploiting and abusing" to various forms of "mental cruelty" such as the (threatened) withdrawal of parental love, have been employed so as to alienate children from their desire - from their ability to articulate, or even be aware of strong feelings in themselves (1983 p.4). She quotes from a contemporary manual from 1748:

> "If parents ... drive out wilfulness from the very beginning by means of scolding and the rod, they will have obedient, docile and good children... One of the advantages of these early years is that force and compulsion can be used... If their wills can be broken at this time, they will never remember afterwards that they had a will" (Sultzer 1748, quoted in Miller 1983 pp.11-13).

Such practices may be seen as a systematic assault on the infant's ability to construct a subjectivity that, in any way, reflects their own desires (or "will"). If successful, such suppression becomes internalised in a subjectivity that can only transact from positions of obedience and docility, and excludes the possibility of feeling anger towards the parents that perpetrated this abuse (or, by implication, with others in positions of authority). However, such anger may still be displaced on to those in subordinate positions - perhaps most particularly on to their own children when they, themselves, become parents, thereby reproducing the patterns of abuse:

> "The forbidden and therefore unexpressed anger ... does not disappear, but is transformed with time into a more or less conscious hatred directed against either the self or substitute persons, a hatred that will always seek to discharge itself in various ways permissable and suitable for an adult" (ibid. p.61).

Modern child-rearing practices have moved away, to some extent, from the use of physical force, although in a random study conducted in 1985, 97% of respondents admitted hitting their three year old child at some time, indicating that this is still the ultimate sanction for most children (see Hotaling et al 1988 p.31). To some extent, this has been replaced by other similarly overwhelming sanctions, but this time at the level of emotionality, such the (implied) threat that "Mummy won't love you" - if the child persists in crying, being angry or refusing to do what it is told. Alice Miller (1983) argues that, underpinning such practices is a widespread and often unconscious ideology that constructs them as 'natural' - an ideology that needs to be challenged and contested:

> "There is a basic assumption in our society that this treatment is good for children... By uncovering the unconscious rules of the power game and the methods by which it attains legitimacy, we are certainly in a position to bring about basic changes" (pp.16,62).

It is notable, as we saw earlier, that in female-headed households, moves towards more respectful and co-operative child-rearing practices have been made, ones which acknowledge to a greater extent the child's right to its own thoughts and feelings, and which see decision-making as, where possible, a process of negotiation rather than the imposition of the (patriarchal) 'will' of the parent upon the 'will' of the child.

The emotional organisation of bourgeois and working class family forms both arises out of, and actively reproduces, the unspoken rules as to who may own and express particular emotions. In order to understand the specific mechanisms of this, it is useful to explore in more depth the psychoanalytic concept of 'projection', the process whereby "elements which cannot be tolerated by one or more of the family members are reallocated inside or outside the family in an attempt to avoid the experience of internal conflict" (Moustaki 1981 p.166). An instance the operation of such a process is given by Anna Freud:

> "When a husband displaces onto his wife his own impulses to be unfaithful and then reproaches her passionately with unfaithfulness ... his intention is not to protect himself against aggression from without, but against ... disturbing forces from within" (1964 p.120)

It is suggested that this is a process that takes place almost totally outside awareness. As a consequence, the mechanism by which the split-off feeling could be transferred to another person has been far from obvious. The originator of the projection would seem to be facing, on the verge of their awareness, an urgent but unacceptable element of their desiring - one that is incompatible with the organisation of their emotional subjectivity. For a man, that might be some element of distress or vulnerability. For a woman, that might be anger or aggression. What needs to be clarified are the mechanisms by which the recipient chooses to (or is forced to) take on the projected feeling:

> "Projective identification is an unconscious process which takes place between two people... Some differentiation has to be made between 'receiving' and 'colluding' with the projections. It is

> important not to see the object of the projections as necessarily passive... The object ... may be involved to a varied extent, according to the readiness or vulnerability with which he receives the projections" (Waddell 1981 p.20).

What is missing from this framework is any analysis of interpersonal power relations. It is inequalities of power that can set up specific patterns of subjectivity and transaction in the family, which can, in turn, determine the degree of "readiness" or "vulnerability" of the recipient of a projection. For example, a woman involved in a dispute with neighbours, whose subjectivity is constructed so as to disqualify her feelings of anger and aggression, may instead take on the role of Victim and present the issue to her husband, hoping to set him up as her Rescuer who will deal with her feelings for her. In this instance, he may be "ready" to take on the projection of expressing anger and aggression on her behalf, since it invites him into one of his familiar roles of Persecutor or Aggressor (in relation to the neighbour), which serves to maintain his power position as the one who can represent the family in their external dealings (and it reinforces his wife's incapacity to be angry on her own behalf). However, in the instance cited by Anna Freud, it is unlikely that the woman "readily" accepts her continued subjection to her husband's Persecutory accusations. The inequality in the power relationship shows through in the way that the woman is clearly not able to move out of the position of Victim, in which she has to hold, and be punished for, the moral discomfort that is rightly her husband's. From the position of Victim, she is neither able

to tell him to stop, nor to suggest that maybe it is he, and not she, who is tending towards infidelity.

During her/his years of material and emotional dependency, a child is particularly vulnerable to accept projections from significant adults. The child may continually be situated in parental discourses such that s/he is only recognised if s/he reflects particular emotional qualities (e.g. appearing loving, strong, funny or sulky). S/he may perhaps pick up subtle signs of encouragement or discouragement for the expression of particular emotions, or perhaps being coerced into the display of certain feelings. As Goodrich et al argue, it is in response to their powerlessness in other spheres that "mothers in this culture project so many of their needs on to the child: where else do they experience their power so unobstructed?" (1988 p.99). However, despite the fact that it is the mother who typically spends more time with the children, research shows that it is actually the father who is most powerful in imposing the attributions of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' on to how they behave, and ultimately on to how these are incorporated in their subjectivities - even in families where parents consciously attempt to adopt non-sexist child-rearing practices (see Johnson 1986).

Through the particular construction of their emotional subjectivity, girls are more vulnerable than boys to taking on emotional projections from parents. As we have seen, boys learn to construct themselves to contain their own feelings and be insensitive to those of others - and hence give few openings for taking on other's projections (apart from taking on aggressive feelings that are consistent with 'phallic'

desire). By contrast, given the degree to which girls must structure their subjectivity in terms of the "Good Fairy"/"Bad Witch" significations, they open themselves to accept the projected emotions of those around them. As the "Good Fairy", a girl learns to use her intuition to construct herself to articulate and respond to other people's wishes and needs, even when they are not overtly expressed. As the "Bad Witch" she represents the ideal "container" for other people's unacceptable feelings and desires.

By their being constructed as 'different', boys are able to experience some emotional closeness and caring from their mothers without being particularly vulnerable to accepting their emotional projections. However, the lack of boundary between mother and daughter allows the mother to project some of her own internalised "good" or "bad" objects, and the emotions that go with them, directly on to her daughter. She will do this by relating to her daughter as if the latter actually possessed these qualities:

> "When a mother looks at an infant son she sees someone who is quite other ... but she knows her daughter will follow in her own footsteps... A mother ... projects on to her some of the feelings she has about herself. Having superimposed these deeply buried feelings which are inaccessible and unconscious she experiences them as if expressed in her daughter" (Eichenbaum and Orbach 1985 p.41).

By such a mechanism, a mother can pass on elements of her own emotional oppression onto her daughter - a process that is so powerful because it is invisible.

It is in situations where their still fragile subjectivity is violated - for example, if they are physically or sexually abused - that children can be forced to take on (in some confused form) whatever feeling is so violently rejected by the parent (for example, vulnerability, hurt, fear or particular constructions of sexual desire). This is an extreme form of projection that is undertaken almost exclusively by men whose emotionality may be so stunted that, for them:

> "Sexual excitement is the only possible form of emotional communication other than rage... [They] unabashedly reveal their sexual needs to their children and receive from them the ersatz satisfaction they require. Between parents' overt violation of the child and their unconscious (because repressed) expectation lies a whole spectrum of parental attitudes that inevitably produce in the child feelings of bewilderment and inadequacy, disorientation, stress, powerlessness and overstimulation" (Miller 1985 pp.149-50).

It may be seen that many of the feelings that are engendered in the child are the very same feelings of vulnerability and uncertainty that the abuser is himself repressing within his own emotionality.

From the above discussion, it may be seen that the psychoanalytic concept of projection, once reformulated within an understanding of power relations, helps to unwrap the mechanisms by which prevailing forms of family organisation structure the emotionality of its members: how, within the family, women find themselves systematically containing and articulating the feelings of men, and how girls more than boys take on specific emotions on behalf of their parents. These processes both reflect and reproduce inequalities in power at an emotional level.

6: THE FIELD OF FAMILY THERAPY: BEYOND THE HEGEMONY OF SYSTEMS APPROACHES

Introduction

Despite a history going back over thirty years, family therapy has found it hard to gain mainstream acceptance within any existing professional group, or to construct itself as a profession in its own right (see Treacher 1986). This may have resulted from a number of factors. Many established professions (psychiatry, psychology, nursing and, to a considerable extent, social work) have employed an individualised model of practice - one that finds it hard to see a client's distress in any wider context. Family therapy has therefore tended to threaten such traditional ways of working (see Miller 1990). By contrast, some more radical perspectives (particularly within social work) have tended to criticise any form of 'therapy' (whether individual or family) as concentrating on too narrow a context - suggesting that it is only possible to empower people by bringing them together with others in similar positions through consciousness raising and collective action.

While the latter approaches have undoubtedly proved successful in many contexts (such as women's groups, tenants' groups or black cultural associations), they may sometimes be insufficient as a means of addressing any legacy of repression and distortion that exists *within* the internal organisation of individuals and of their closest relationships. Particularly through the work of feminist therapists, there has been a rediscovery of the importance of work with individuals

- a realisation that people were not the uncomplicated subjects of humanism who could seize opportunities once they were presented, but could be held back by an internalised history of powerlessness (see Ernst and Goodison 1981 p.4). It is suggested that people may require some specific support in looking at blocks to change within themselves and in renegotiating intimate relationships in which they may feel particularly powerless. Critical perspectives may be used to expose the complexities of personal subjectivity and interpersonal relationships, and hence to inform a practice that is based on 'unconsciousness raising' as well as collective action. The 'Women's Therapy' movement has done much to rework individual psychotherapy as a way of confronting oppressive power relations *within* the organisation of the psyche (see, for example, Eichenbaum and Orbach 1985).

Similar issues apply in relation to challenging oppresion within the context of familial or intimate relationships. For example, while a woman may be helped to understand her domestic oppression within a women's group, this may be insufficient, on its own, to enable her to change her situation. What it cannot do is to give her any direct support in conducting any process of renegotiation - a renegotiation that must be conducted from a position of relative powerlessness. Just as an individual therapist may need to give direct support to the repressed elements within a person's psyche in order for the oppressive power of dominant elements to be challenged, so a family therapist may perhaps be useful in facilitating and supporting those family members in relatively powerless positions in their attempts to negotiate a more equitable form of internal organisation with their current oppressors.

Clearly, for both forms of intervention there are intrinsic difficulties in relation to 'getting in'. In order for an individual therapist to be allowed into a person's inner world, some compromises must be made: the therapist cannot afford to antagonise too greatly those elements that are currently dominant within that person's psyche, but must, at the same time, offer some real possibility of support to those elements currently repressed. Similar dilemmas face the family therapist: some degree of accommodation to the dominant elements is required if the therapist is to be allowed in to the family at all, and some active participation of those currently oppressing is necessary if this oppression is to be addressed directly with them. This demands some degree of compromise in terms of how issues may be tackled, and at what pace - but it does not mean that questions of power and inequality have to be excluded from the agenda. Thus it may be seen that, although any form of empowering therapy has intrinsic limitations, the direct support and intervention of a therapist may be needed if powerless or excluded elements are ever to be given a voice within an oppressive personal or familial organisation.

In practice, family therapists have rarely sought (explicitly or covertly) to achieve the emancipation of disempowered family members - although in recent years some practitioners have sought to include some concepts of power and oppression in their work. For example, White and Epston have turned to discourse theory as a possible source of understanding. They draw on the work of Foucault in identifying that the language and meanings employed in the therapeutic discourse have implications in terms of 'power'. However, the concept of power that is

used derives from a humanist rather than a critical tradition, so that instead of describing a structural relationship between people, it refers to the collective domination of (all) family members by discourses ("stories") that can constitute certain behaviours as "problems". Power is seen as residing in the realm of "meaning" and it is suggested that it is "the meaning that members attribute to events that determines their behaviour" (1990 p.3). This approach seeks not so much to empower family members with regard to each other (or external structures of power), but to take charge of and "author" their own unique "stories" that "externalise" and give them power over the meaning and significance of their identified "problems". Such a subjective and individualised vision of 'power' fails to conceptualise how a family organisation (or a social formation) may be structured in terms of domination and subordination (or of power together).

In the following Sections, I will review how issues of power are understood (or concealed) within the various current approaches to family therapy practice. Most are based on an understanding of family organisation that is derived from general systems theory - and these will be considered first. Some less widely practiced approaches have sought to use alternative models of family dynamics, and these will be discussed later. Other approaches have used methods of individual therapy (for example, training in communication skills) within the setting of a family meeting (see Berkowitz and Graziano 1972, Stuart 1976, Falloon et al 1986). However, as these approaches have not attempted to theorise familial organisation as such, they are not directly relevant to the present study.

The systemic approaches: theoretical base

The use of systems theory as a model for understanding family organisation goes back to the work of the Palo Alto group and Gregory Bateson (1972). Searching for a way of conceptualising the family unit as something more than the simple aggregate of otherwise unconnected individuals, they borrowed ideas from various applications of general systems theory in biology and control engineering (see von Bertalanffy 1968; Weiner 1961). There were two key strands to this. Firstly, from biology were borrowed models of the self-regulating mechanisms of ecosystems whereby, in the long run, different species remain in balance with one another and adapt to changing environmental circumstances. From control engineering were borrowed models used to develop artificial regulatory systems (cybernetics) - for example, in the efficient running of industrial processes or in the design of communication networks.

Underlying the systems model are a number of theoretical assumptions, which, while being appropriate in the fields of ecology and control engineering, have major implications in how familial relations are understood. There is an unquestioned assumption that stability and regulation are desirable in themselves - the family being seen as a consensus situated within a wider consensual social order. Any 'artificial' interference in the system is seen as likely to damage its 'naturally' healthy functioning:

> "The living world is viewed as organised in recursive layers of autonomous systems that are related through feedback structure, and

are self-regulating by nature. If left alone, these systems will balance and heal themselves" (Atkinson and Heath 1990 p.145).

The only disturbances to this stability are seen to be changes to the external environment and 'natural' points of transition during the family life-cycle (biological analogy), or deviant activity or relationships that require correction in order not to disrupt the overall functional efficiency of the system (cybernetic analogy).

Change is understood in terms of the scale of system at which change takes place. There is the possibility of an individual change being accommodated within the existing pattern of system organisation. Within a reasonably flexible family system, events such as the illness of a parent, or an isolated incident of stealing by a child, may be dealt without any need to change the 'rules' by which the family operates. However, more serious or recurring incidents, or life-cycle changes such as a child wanting to leave home, may not be so easily accommodated by the system, and the system itself is required to change. Possibilities of change are constrained by the family system itself being part of wider social systems (for example, the extended family) with their own sets of 'rules' about how families should and should not operate (see Cronen and Pearce 1985). Family dysfunction is seen to be caused, not by the precipitating 'problem', but by insufficient flexibility in the family system resulting in a maladaptive adjustment - an attempted 'solution' that is maintained by the continuance of the 'problem' behaviour of (usually) one family member. The goal of therapy is to alter the systemic context so as to enable the family to adopt a more functional organisation, releasing that family member from having to

carry on with a problem behaviour that had since become 'stuck' as part of the organisation of the family system.

The assumptions of systems theory have interlinked with those of functionalist sociology. The behaviour of each individual is seen to form a complementary part of, and be functional for, the self-regulation of a family system. In turn, a family is seen to be organised so as to fit into the smooth running of a wider social order. No allowance is made for the possibility for oppression or conflict within the social order, the family or the individual. Instead, power relations are seen only in terms of the "generalised capacity of a social system to get things done in the interest of collective goals" (Parsons 1960 p.181). Within the context of family therapy, this leads to hypotheses that deviant behaviour is not to be understood as some sort of protest against perceived injustice, but may be functional in maintaining the order of the family system in the face of a perceived threat to its stability. A child's violent or self-injurious behaviour is perhaps understood as a means of keeping her/his parents from splitting up - by giving them something to talk about. This perspective serves to mask any dialectics of tension and conflict that may underlie forms of personal and familial organisation, and to ignore this as a potential motive force for change. By stifling the existence of contradiction at a theoretical level, functionalist systems theory operates as an effective way of legitimating and maintaining the status quo.

Systemic therapy has also made connections with the philosophy of constructivism and the work of Maturana (see Maturana and Varela 1980;

Watzlawick 1984; Dell 1985). Maturana argues that, from the point of view of a system, there is no such thing as reality - what 'exists' is only what the system's own processes of self-regulation allow it to see or to react to. In fact, no form of reality is assumed to exist as such - instead there are a potentially infinite number of alternative ways of seeing, each of which can be equally valid. From a systemic viewpoint, all patterns of causation are analysed as if they were circular, but can be punctuated at different points of the circuit in order to give an infinite series of perspectives:

> "We abandon trying to determine whether explanations are true or false. Instead, an evolving process of inventing multiple punctuations of a behaviour, interpretation, event, relationship, and so on, helps us build a more systemic view" (Cecchin 1987 p.407).

From a constructivist perspective, a situation of a husband being violent to his wife could be punctuated equally well as "Husband beats wife in response to her sexual withdrawal" or as "Wife withdraws sexually from husband in response to his violence". Both perspectives are seen as representing part of a circular and self-regulatory process that will continue indefinitely unless some external intervention delivers a jolt to the system which then sets up a different pattern of self-reinforcing behaviours. Oppression, as such, is not seen as real within a constructivist worldview, only as one possible punctuation of a systemic process. Thus victims of abuse may be seen as equally responsible with other parts of the system for contributing to and maintaining an abusive system - and even the question of abuse itself can only be a matter of individual or societal (consensual) opinion.

Schools of systemic family therapy

Broadly speaking, there are three schools of family therapy that are based on a systemic analysis of family processes: those of strategic (or brief) therapy, structural therapy and the Milan (and post-Milan) approaches. In practice these all interlink to a considerable extent.

Structural family therapists, such as Salvador Minuchin, are theoretically explicit as to the ways they seek to restructure a family so that it can be more 'functional' (although this information is not directly shared with the families themselves):

> "The family system is organised around the support, regulation, nurturance and socialisation of its members. Hence the therapist joins the family ... to repair or modify the family's own functioning so that it can better perform these tasks" (1974 p.14).

The process of restructuring is achieved by the therapist using the power of her/his personality and position as 'expert' to take over temporary leadership of the family. S/he uses her/his influence to destabiliise and renegotiate power structures, forming alliances with those parts of the family that s/he sees as being insufficiently powerful within the existing dysfunctional family organisation. Once 'modified' in this way, it is assumed that the family system will find a new and more functional equilibrium and will, thence forth, be maintained by its own "self-regulatory mechanisms" (ibid.). Although any one family form is not seen as being inherently superior to any other, nevertheless "structural family therapy must start with a model of normality against which to measure deviance" (ibid. p.15).

Structural therapists identify certain features of family organisation as being dysfunctional. These relate to how boundaries are constructed between family subsystems: the children as a sibling subsystem, and the relationship between a couple, both as a spouse subsystem and (conceptualised separately) as a parenting subsystem. In order for the family system as a whole to be able to adapt to changing circumstances (for example the growing up of the children), it is seen as important that these boundaries are both clearly defined and flexible (in order for each part of the system to be able to make its own adjustments). It is seen as dysfunctional for boundaries to be either too diffuse or too rigid. Diffuse boundaries are seen as resulting in enmeshment: over-sensitivity, instability and lack of privacy. Spouses are seen as needing to have the right to have a private disagreement without anxious children (or grandparents) intervening. Similarly, according to Minuchin, "The boundaries of the sibling subsystem should protect the children from adult interference, so that they can exercise their right to privacy, have their own areas of interest, and be free to fumble as they explore" (1974 p.59). Rigid boundaries are seen as dysfunctional because a lack of sensitivity between subsystems prevents a process of mutual negotiation taking place as needs and expectations change. For example, the parental subsystem may fail to respond to the demand for increasing power and influence from the sibling subsystem as it grows older.

As can be seen, the whole analysis is couched within a functionalist problematic and so the concept of 'rights' is one derived from bourgeois liberalism rather than any critical analysis. It rests on two

underlying assumptions: firstly, that the processes of the family unit are essentially harmonious and unoppressive, and secondly, on a notion that there is an 'appropriate' power hierarchy within family organisation:

> "Effective family functioning requires that parents and children accept the fact that the differentiated use of authority is a necessary ingredient of the parental subsystem... The children ... need to know how to negotiate in situations of unequal power" (ibid. p.58).

Age (and, by implication, gender) inequalities are just seen as the rational consequence of the power of the system (and of the social order as a whole) to allocate authority in differential ways to system members in line with their duties and responsibilities in maintaining family functioning.

The practice methodology of structural family therapy tends to exacerbate these deficiencies. The therapist joins the family as a powerful and manipulative leader who directs the content of the session - in fact, almost as a personification of patriarchal power. Thus the therapist is in a strong position to impose her/his values and assumptions as to how a family is organised. Bebe Speed suggests various common assumptions that are often imposed, for example that "parents should be in charge of their children" and that "wives share equal responsibility for their husbands' physical violence towards them" (1987 p.236-7).

The school of strategic or brief therapy takes as its starting point the 'problem' as it is presented by the family, which will generally be defined as an aspect of the behaviour of a particular family member. While overtly accepting the family's definition of the 'problem', and hence conforming with the existing power structure in the family, the therapist seeks to understand it on the basis of a systemic hypothesis, one that sees the system's dysfunctional adaptation (its attempted 'solution') as actively maintaining the behavioural problem. In strategic therapy, the aim is to deliver a jolt to the system, so as to disrupt the existing stuck pattern sufficiently to enable the system to adjust to the changed circumstances. The therapist devises a covert strategy that puts the family in a logically impossible position, making it inevitable that they change one way or another, although the direction of the change cannot always be predicted. In order to do this, the therapist must maintain maximum manoeverability by never disclosing her/his real thoughts or feelings. Therefore, the therapist is never judgemental, all behaviour tending to be connoted in a positive fashion, with no direct confrontation of any process or behaviour, however oppressive it might be.

Strategic therapy involves offering interventions to the family in the form of tasks or instructions, usually delivered with some formality at the end of a session. These are formulated so as to address the presenting problem (and so win the co-operation of the family), but, at the same time (and out of the awareness of the family), to precipitate a shift in the dysfunctional organisation of the system, often by placing it in a logical paradox:

> "The therapist plans a strategy for solving the client's problems. The goals ... always coincide with solving the presenting problem... He must decide on an intervention which will shift the family organisation so that the presenting problem is not necessary. This intervention takes the form of a directive about something the family is to do both in and out of the interview. Directives may be straightforward or paradoxical... These directives have the purpose of changing the ways people relate to each other and the therapist" (Madanes and Haley 1977 p.96).

Within the strategic school there has been an ongoing debate between those, such as Haley, who employ functional notions of the appropriate distribution of power within the family derived from the structural approach, and those such as Watzlawick and Fisch, who focus instead on systemic circularity and the multiple punctuations that may be put on 'reality'. While the former see power as real (but not in a *critical* sense as in gender, class or race oppression), the latter see power as a subjective impression that depends on who is observing rather than what is actually going on. In practice, the former would use the power position of the therapist to set interventions so as to restore an 'appropriate' (or functional) power structure of a family (moving power from children or grandparents back to the parents). By contrast, the latter, drawing on the constructivist position of Maturana, would see change in terms of stimulating a perturbation in the system of self-reinforcing beliefs and actions that cause the problem behaviour to be seen as a problem (see Hoffman 1985).

Many elements of the strategic approach, together with notions of hierarchy drawn from the structural approach, have been integrated within the Milan (or systemic) school of family therapy. It is this approach that has dominated the family therapy field in Britain for the last decade (less so in America), although now its hegemony is beginning to waver, with various 'post-Milan' approaches coming to the fore (see Campbell and Draper 1985, Jones 1988). The Milan approach is characterised by an emphasis on intellectual rigour in analysis, and the use of professional power to exercise total and rigid control of the therapy session. Typically, the therapist would be backed up by a team of consultants who would view the session from behind a one-way screen. At the close of each session, the therapist would withdraw for consultation and return with a carefully coded intervention, consisting of comments on the observed process of family relationships, and prescriptions for action (or inaction).

The three key concepts of the Milan approach are "hypothesising", "circularity" and "neutrality". Hypotheses situate the 'problem' behaviour as part of the functioning of the system. Hypotheses are never seen as right or wrong: in strategic therapy, the only criterion is one of usefulness. Any hypothesis is seen as useful in that it helps guide the therapist in devising questions and eliciting information about the organisation of the system, and to maintain tight control over the discourse of the therapeutic session (preventing the family from speaking in their own way):

> "The hypothesis, as such, is neither true nor false, but rather, *more or less useful*. Even a hypothesis that proves to be false

> contributes information... The functional value of the hypothesis in the family interview is substantially that of guaranteeing the activity of the therapist... Entering the session already provided with a hypothesis, the therapist can take the initiative, proceed with order, regulate, interrupt, guide, and provoke transactions, all the time avoiding being inundated by a flood of meaningless chatter" (Selvini Palazzoli et al 1980 pp.5,8)

During the early work of the Milan school, all hypotheses were formulated on the basis of the supposed functionality of the 'symptomatic behaviour' for all parts of the system, and especially for the relationship between the parents.

An example of an intervention constructed on the basis of such a hypothesis is to be found in the work of the Milan group with an anorexic boy and his family. The functional hypothesis was as follows: the boy's anger at not being permitted by his parents to grow up into a man had become channelled into his anorexia; however, this rebellion actually served to maintain the status quo in the family by keeping him physically small and dependent as a child. The boy was told that he was being good and helpful to his parents by acting out a typically feminine condition (anorexia) so as to comply with their wish that he should have been a girl, and it was requested that he should continue to do this. The intervention addresses and positively connotes the deviant behaviour, links it to an oblique reference to the underlying systemic impasse, and finally delivers a paradoxical instruction that defines his rebellious act as conformity, but also gives him control over his behaviour. This places him in the position that his desire to rebel can

now only lead him to eat again (which was the actual outcome in this case).

In order to structure their work along systemic lines, the Milan group laid great emphasis on the concept of "circularity". In order to distract themselves from focusing on any individual within the family, they only sought information about relationships, and more specifically, changes in relationships or comparison between relationships, as viewed by all other members of the family system. In particular they used this technique of "circular questioning" to elicit information on the systemic context of the symptomatic behaviour (and also to disrupt and silence the family's customary patterns of interaction and communication about 'the problem').

The group took further the stategic therapists' notion of retaining manoeuvrability and determined that the therapist's stance should be one of "neutrality":

> "The therapist is allied with everyone and no-one at the same time... The declaration of any judgement, whether it be of approval or disapproval, implicitly and inevitably allies him with one of the individuals or groups within the family... It is our belief that the therapist can be effective only to the extent that he is able to obtain and maintain a different level ... from that of the family" (ibid. p.11).

This principle, so clearly enunciated, has caused particular controversy in relation to working with families where child abuse is, or has been, taking place (see, for example, Carter et al 1986). According to their

principles of therapy, it was impossible for them to take any moral, legal or political stance in relation to the abuse, or to take any direct action to ensure the safely of the child, since this would interfere with the system making its own adjustment. In practice, they were not able to avoid taking action - but defined this as a legal and not a therapeutic move:

> "Unfortunately, we cannot fully ignore the social constructions imposed by legalistic, societal and cultural systems. Incest is defined as a crime. When we are limited to working with the social construction of crime, we must recognise that we cannot act therapeutically but, rather, we are constrained to act legally... If we accept the legal position, how can we address the need to be therapeutic?" (Cecchin et al 1987 p.409).

This demonstrates the degree to which oppressive power relations are not considered to be a 'therapeutic' issue in themselves. It is only if this oppression is also illegal that action has to be taken (somewhat grudgingly) to protect the victim of abuse. In all other situations, it would be argued, such issues would only be resolved indirectly via some sort of systemic rearragement, one whose rationale would be functionality rather than the elimination of oppressive power relationships. This suggests an underlying decision, in terms of therapeutic values, that maintaining the integrity of the system be given priority over maintaining that of individual family members against violation by more powerful members of the system.

The subsequent developments of the Milan school (see Jones 1988) have shifted the analytical focus from systems of interlocking behaviour to emphasise the importance of family belief systems. Following Maturana, there has been an increasing disinterest in any 'reality' of family interaction (abusive or otherwise), only in how it is constructed within the family's system of perceptions and beliefs - the family 'story' (see Boscolo et al 1987, Cecchin 1987). In Britain, the early emphasis on the functionality of the 'symptomatic behaviour' has been replaced by "the notion that problems in families result from the experience of 'bad fit' between the beliefs and behaviours of family members" (Campbell et al 1989 p.11).

Healthy family life is conceptualised as a stable and self-reinforcing set of consensus beliefs and corresponding actions: the beliefs guide the actions, and the actions provide positive feedback for these beliefs. However, changes in circumstances may dictate new behaviours which, in turn, may require changes in the family belief system. It is at such points that families are seen sometimes to get 'stuck', requiring a therapeutic intervention that builds on any potential flexibility in the belief/behaviour system in order to accommodate behaviour that has come to be regarded as problematic:

> "The aim of a family therapist is to interact with the family in a way that ... [enables] individual family members ... perceive a new context in which the problem behaviour, and its accompanying beliefs, acquire new meanings" (ibid. p.16)

As with earlier work in the Milan tradition, great steps are taken to honour the existing belief system of the family, irrespective of how oppressive they may be to particular family members. Changes that occur are of a subtle nature, accommodating new possibilities without endangering the greater part of the family's existing world-view. For Elsa Jones, a feminist who works within this approach, this almost disqualifies any possibility of her even *asking questions* about inequalities of power, never mind acting to enable disadvantaged family members to work towards redressing them:

> "Therapists must do what they do in such a way as ... to enable members of [the] system to reorganise themselves, by drawing on their own resources, in a manner coherent with their own history, beliefs, and adaptive abilities... I assume that it is not my business to hold specific goals for client system organisation post-therapy. If I were exploring client concerns in regard to stealing, depression, psychosomatic symptoms, drug abuse, marital unhappiness, and so on, I would explore exactly how these behaviours show themselves at present, what the influences of wider familial traditions and expectations are on them, and what the consequences for the family system might be were they to change or not to change. If I ask similar questions about gender roles and their relation to satisfaction/dissatisfaction, decision making, finance, role modelling, negotiation, and so on, am I biasing the course of therapy by introducing gender politics into a non-relevant arena?" (1990 pp.64,78).

Critiques of Systemic Approaches

Within the field of family therapy, there have appeared an increasing number of critiques of both the theory and practice of systemic approaches: "The idea that families are systems, which started as a metaphor, gradually became a straitjacket for family therapy" (Perelberg and Miller 1990 p.54). Such critiques have come not only from feminist and socialist practitioners, but also from some therapists who found that systems theory was inadequate as a metaphor for family processes, even to achieve the bourgeois goal of the technical adjustment of deviancy. Evaluating the clinical outcomes of the Milan group, one of its founders, Selvini Palazzoli, reflects that:

> "Some of our results were doubtful at best and there had been quite a number of downright failures. Moreover, we were perplexed by the frequency of relapse in the wake of brilliant initial response... Dissatisfaction on clinical grounds with paradoxical methods began to co-incide with our half-spoken but growing misgivings about systemic theory as a whole" (1989 pp.3, 151).

The principal element to her critique is the way in which the use of the systems metaphor treats family members as objects whose purpose is defined by their place in a wider functional order, thereby ignoring the potential impact of their subjectivity:

> "Systemic analogy involving aggregates whose components lack subjectivity (cells, telephones) entirely disregards the individual dimension. Systemic holism takes only such variables into account as fit the idea of the family as a whole, i.e. communication, myth, rules, and the like... The holistic idea is closely tied in with

> that of functionalism. Functionalism considers the behaviour of all subsystems *subservient* to the survival and cohesion of the whole" (ibid. pp.155-6).

In turn, this ignores any historical dimension of analysis: how a particular family organisation may be seen as the end result of a process of interaction between active subjects.

In recognising the impossibility of understanding familial relations on the basis of the actions of 'pure' subjects (a humanist position), systems theory switches to the opposite sense of the bourgeois dualism and objectifies the organisation of family relationships, beliefs and actions (a positivist position):

> "The basic thought form of systems theory remains classical positivism and behaviourism... It offers nothing new to ... the problem of Cartesian dualism. There remains no point at which one can say that there is a link between subjectivity and material processes; the solution, insofar as they can be said to have one is to legislate subjectivity out of existence" (Lilienfield 1987 p.250)

Given this, a systems understanding inevitably leads to a practice that focuses on technical regulation rather than fundamental change: the manipulation of human 'objects' into their 'appropriate' slots within a pre-given social order rather than seeing their potential consciousness of their situation as a motive force for its transformation.

The debate between systems theory and critical theories such as feminism or Marxism has been somewhat confusing, particularly in relation to concepts such as 'causation' and 'power'. Systems therapists have

incorrectly characterised a feminist approach as implying 'lineal' causation: either blaming men as if they were free bourgeois subjects *choosing* to be violent and abusive, or blaming some ethereal entity called 'patriarchy' as *causing* both men and women to take on particular roles as passive 'objects' (see Libow et al 1982, Pilalis and Anderton 1986). This is then contrasted with the greater sophistication of systems theory in understanding circular causation. What is missing from these debates is an understanding of how critical theory supercedes both these examples of bourgeois thought with its conceptualisation of *dialectical* causation: the processes of interdetermination between historically specific structures of power relations, operating at the scales of psychic, familial and social organisation.

Within the practice of systemic family therapy, there has been an ongoing debate as to questions of power, which goes back to the work of Bateson, one of their 'founding fathers'. In some of his early work, for example, the initial formulation of the double bind theory (see Bateson 1972), he implicitly accepts the importance of power relations in understanding the impact of internally contradictory communication. Whereas it would seem unreasonable that ambiguity, in itself, should drive a person to develop schizophrenic symptoms, Bateson considers the position of a child who is subjected in a power position such that s/he cannot clarify or reject what is being asked of her/him, but is required to act, knowing that whatever s/he does will then be defined as wrong. (For example, a child cannot easily escape the situation of being invited by a parent to "Show me how much you love me" while, at the same time, seeing her/his parent tensing physically as if feeling repelled.

Either s/he responds to the non-verbal message and declines physical contact - and is thereby construed as not being loving - or s/he hugs the parent and is punished by a non-verbal message of disgust).

By contrast, in his later work, Bateson conceptualised power in purely inter-subjective terms, as a property of the system that is constructed out of the collective beliefs of all system members, rather than being located, to a greater or lesser degree, with any individual:

> "Double binding sequences ensnare both victim and victimiser in the same net... All parties behave as they do because, within a double bind interaction pattern, there is no other way to behave" (Dell 1980 p.323; see also Dell 1989).

From such a constructivist position, people are only seen to be powerful as long as others believe them to be so: the victim is seen as just as influential as the victimiser in maintaining the (subjective) power inequality between them. Power may seem to be real to the participants in an interaction, but only because it has become customary, within a particular cultural and historical context, to view certain people as possessing power (for example, men). Thus, as with the emperor's new clothes, the "myth" of power could be taken away simply by other people ceasing to legitimate it - a game of bluff that, theoretically, could be called at any time. However, as Virginia Goldner argues, any critical analysis of power relations in the family must include "the material and social bases of interpersonal power ... money, power, access to power, fairness, the ability to leave, and so on", and not just focus on "roles" that women and men (and adults and children) can choose to "play" or not (1985 p.23). Thus, in order for us to understand the true

position of the child in the 'double bind', we must examine whether, in reality, s/he is in a position to call her/his parents' bluff - whether their parental power is a myth - or whether s/he is likely to face some very real consequences in terms of deprivation and abuse if s/he questions (or refuses to answer) their ambiguous communications.

Within systems therapy, even when the reality of power inequalities is acknowledged, it is only understood in bourgeois terms as the interplay between a supposedly 'natural' individual desire for status and control, and an equally 'natural' hierarchy of authority that is seen as functional within the given social structure. What is seen to be at issue is the *legitimacy* (or otherwise) of the arrangement of personal power within the family. It is seen as appropriate and functional for adults to have as much authority over children (and, by implication, for men to have as much authority over women) as is the consensus norm within the society at the time. While it is seen as unnecessarily oppressive for adults (and men?) to wield more than this level of power, it is seen as pathological for any of these hierarchies of power to be challenged or reversed. Goldner criticises Haley for his sleight of hand in legitimating the existence of such hierarchies by focusing exclusively on "inherently plausible" assumption that "older people should be in charge of younger ones":

> "By privileging the category of generation, and trivialisisng the category of gender, Haley could dispense with the vexing question of sexual inequality... By speaking only in terms of the universality of generational hierarchies, Haley neutralised the issue of power" (1988 p.21).

The ideological implications of constructivism are ultimately just as conservative as those of functionalism. Maturana proposes that structures of perception and belief arise, not out of subjection within the real power relations of the external world, but out of some idiosyncratic internal process of self-reinforcement and gradual evolution (see Colapinto 1985). As we have seen, this perspective excludes any consideration of the impact of internal and external structures of oppression. As Speed argues:

> "We should be aware that constructivism and social constructionism, in their denial of the influence of a structured reality to what wew know, have taken family therapists up a blind alley. Just because reality is filtered through our perceptions does not mean that it does not exist and does not affect those perceptions" (1991 p.407).

Within this framework of thought, feminist perspectives become divorced from any grounding in real power relations, and may thereby be absorbed as just one idiosyncratic viewpoint among many. In this way, they are not allowed to challenge the particular belief system of a family. This is reflected in the stance of 'neutrality' or 'curiosity' by the therapist - one that is not, as it appears, value-free, but tends actively to support the maintenance of the status quo: at best, it provides a framework by which to explore subjective assumptions about relative power relations (but not to confront the reality of oppression); at worst, it denies the importance of power altogether.

It is in relation to family situations in which the abuse of power is most overt that the appropriateness of systems approaches has been particularly questioned. Within the structural school, physical abuse

may be conceptualised at most as an inappropriate excess in an otherwise acceptable imbalance of power:

> "Because it does not grossly violate our democratic ideals to think in terms of age hierarchies, the authoritarian parent who goes too far can easily be seen as merely 'doing too much of a good thing'" (Goldner 1988 p.22).

Similarly, as McLeod and Saraga argue, sexual abuse may be divorced from any understanding of power and be seen simply as "a *symptom* of what is wrong with the family, or even a 'solution' to the dysfunction" - for example, when a man is "deprived" of his "conjugal rights" (1988 pp.31,33). They criticise the underlying assumptions of a family dysfunction/systems approach as covertly reconstructing and idealising the inherently abusive structure of the bourgeois family:

> "It focuses on the 'family' in which abuse occurs, not in order to expose problematic sexual politics, but in order to enshrine 'normal' family relationships... There is an unwritten assumption that families are functional when men's needs are met" (ibid.).

Within most systemic approaches (including the Milan school), there is no explicit commitment to even a liberal-bourgeois protection of the abused. These approaches are predicated on the principle of equal interactional influence. As power is bracketed out as a variable, all system members are assumed to be on an equal footing, with the apparent authority and helplessness of individuals simply reflecting "complementary" positions that they have chosen to take up, giving them all have equal responsibility for maintaining circular patterns of interaction. For Bebe Speed, herself a leading practitioner, this leads

her to question the application of systemic thinking in all family situations, not just those of overt abuse:

> "The assumption [has been] in family therapy that family members have equal ability to influence each other and that no-one is therefore more responsible than anyone else for the patterns that exist.... I have recently come to question this assumption, as I have found difficulty in assuming equality of influence and responsibility in cases of family violence and sexual abuse. I can still conceptualise these problems as reflections of relationship patterns which fit together interactionally and systemically, but I also see them as consequences of an adult having greater power and thus ability to influence and control others.... If an asymmetry of power, and hence responsibility, in the case of physical and sexual abuse can exist, might not such asymmetry also exist in less contentious interactional patterns where an equal balance is usually assumed?" (1987 p.234-5).

Such doubts are expressed much more forcefully by Sarah Nelson in her swingeing critique of the use of systems thinking in sexual abuse work for failing to take any real account of internal power structures within families, structures that by their very definition open up the possibility of certain family members being abused by others:

> "Family members are treated as equals: no source is given for the decisions that are arrived at. Who is isolating the family from contact or preventing a girl mixing with boyfriends? Who takes the decisions and reinforces them? Who persuades a six year old girl into oral sex with her grandfather? The system?" (1987 p.83).

The inappropriateness of the assumption of equal interactional influence highlights the inadequacy of the systems metaphor as an accurate representation of what is actually going on in a family, irrespective of whether one takes a bourgeois or a critical perspective. Bennun's research on family members' perceptions of the therapist in determining the outcome of the therapy, demonstrated very clearly that it was the man's perception that was the dominant influence on outcome, indicating a very real inequality in interactional influence:

> "Systems approaches based on the theory that family members ... are equal interacting parts ... may only be part of the picture. It appears that the father's position is not equal to that of the mother in determining outcome, and that the notion of family hierarchy is an ambiguous one because of gender roles being linked to power" (1989 p.251).

Although feminists have generally been united in pointing out the theoretical inadequacies of systems theory as it stands, they have been divided as to whether it could somehow be married to a perspective of structural inequality (see, for example, James and McIntyre 1983, Goldner 1988), or whether it stands in fundamental contradiction to any form of critical practice. Goldner argues for "a reading of family relationships at two levels of description: one elucidating the paradoxes of circularity, the other confronting the realities of domination" (1988 p.27). However, this leads to an inevitable dualism: a family therapy practice that can only be a "conversation" to help "elucidate the dilemmas of love and power", with political action to redress the inequalities of power being relegated to some external

sphere. The contrary position is put by Goodrich et al, who argue that systems theory inevitably blinds the therapist to issues of power and structural inequality, and that therapy itself must be political:

> "Systems theory ... provides a seemingly coherent account while actually leaving out [the] critical variables [of] ... gender and power... Who has the power over whom never has to be noticed... Patterns across families reflecting large-scale oppression of women in society are thus kept from entering or troubling the field of vision and discourse... When we concern ourselves with the internal functioning of families without altering the power differences, we are in complicity with [keeping] women oppresed" (1988 pp.15-16).

In addition to critiques of its theoretical base, feminists and socialists have looked at the power relations of the actual practice of systemic approaches and, in particular, at the role of the therapist. Unlike feminist therapy, there is no tradition of openness and empowerment through sharing with clients. By contrast, systemic therapists distance themselves in order to retain their manoeuvrability and neutrality in order to be able to manipulate family interactions:

> "A feminist and a family-systems approach are generally agreed to be at variance in two main areas... The first major difference is that feminists believe in reducing the power differentials between therapist and client and aim for a more open and egalitarian relationship. In contrast, the family therapist typically uses 'expert power'... The second difference which follows from this is that the feminist therapist will place much greater emphasis on the role of understanding as a means of producing change. Family

> therapists ... find that explaining the rationale behind their interventions often makes them less effective. The reason feminist therapists promote insight concerns the issue of power and the belief that understanding the reasons for change is in itself empowering" (Burck and Daniel 1990 p.84).

Systems therapists deliberately use their power position as professional 'expert' in order to exert power over the family, but tend to be evasive as to what changes they are trying to bring about. Whether operating according to the more overt "push and shove" of the structural approach, or the more subtle interventions of the Milan approach, therapists are in a position to impose oppressive white bourgeois patriarchal values on to the way in which familial organisation is changed:

> "Family therapists ... sometimes fail to realize that their judgements may partially derive from [their] social class position... I am not sure that they are always so observant about cross-class values or about gender-based values and ... this is particularly problematic... All therapists inevitably operate on the basis of values, and one could argue that the more hidden value assumptions of the less directive therapists such as the Milan group are more insidious because they are less obvious and thus less easy to challenge" (Speed 1987 p.237).

Given the nature of the therapy process, it is hard to see how it could lead to any form of empowerment or liberation. The process rests on the de-skilling and domination of families by the deliberate use of professional mystique and behind-the-scenes manipulation. Families have

little or no control over (or sense of participation in) the therapy process, which must exacerbate their already existing sense of powerlessness. Treacher criticises systemic therapy as practiced by the Milan group:

> "The ... approach is essentially clinical and concentrates on very elaborate, therapist-derived interventions which produce changes which take place largely outside the family's consciousness. In practice their approach recapitulates many features of the medical model, including the notorious activity-passivity dimension.... The therapist remains in a position of power and persists in treating the family as an object" (1986 p.278-9).

In this way, the terms under which therapy is conducted, irrespective of the actual content of the interventions, are so profoundly authoritarian that the process of therapy itself will always tend to reinforce the patriarchal basis of the existing power relations of the family.

Both the theory and the practice of systemic approaches may be seen to be firmly wedded to the notion that the family unit is constituted out of order and functionality (but subject to temporary aberration), rather than being constituted out of domination and oppression. Thus, at the level of practice, there would seem to be a fundamental and unbridgeable gulf between a systemic approach and one predicated on principles of consciousness raising or empowerment. The former treats people as objects to be manipulated while the latter takes seriously their subjectivity - the complex process whereby people can, collectively and individually, begin to take more power over how they live their lives.

Alternative models of family process

Although 'system' has been the dominant metaphor that has been used to understand familial organisation, a number of alternative metaphors for family process have been proposed. I will consider these in the light of how successful they are in overcoming the theoretical deficiencies of the systems approach, in particular, their ability:

1) To link issues of family process to those of the individual processes of specific family members.
2) To transcend the subject/object dualism in relation to both 'the family' and 'the individual' in order to highlight dialectical mechanisms of conflict and change.
3) To reintroduce history - understanding present arrangements in terms of how they came into being.
4) To contextualise the family within the specific structural power relations of the social formation.
5) To enable the therapist to be critically aware of the extent to which her/his interventions are empowering or disempowering, both to particular family members and to the family as a whole.

These criteria may be seen to be central to any critical understanding of family process. The models that I will consider comprise two metaphors that have been developed out of dissatisfaction with existing systemic approaches, those of "The Game" and "The Dance", followed by two approaches that seek to extend models of intrapsychic functioning so as to provide metaphors for processes occurring at the scale of the family: the frameworks of psychoanalytic and gestalt family therapy.

A) The 'Game'

Even the early formulations of the Milan school began to show signs of departing from the purity of a systems approach and 'redicovering' the importance of the individual subject. Reviewing the seminal work of the Milan school, "Paradox and Counterparadox", Fisch comments that:

> "The authors ... gradually depart from a systems concept to one more consistent with monadic and intrapsychic concepts. Creeping in more and more explicitly is the view that the family, rather than a system, is a collection of individuals, each motivated by the same internal and personal striving, principally a hidden and competitive yearning - even an obsession - for ultimate control of the family and the relationships within it" (1979 p.213).

It is interesting to note the similarity between this obsession for control and the concept of "will" that underlies a Western bourgeois view of "man" (the ideological component of 'phallic' subjectivity) - although here it is assumed to an equally accurate description of the essential 'nature' of women and children.

Of the original Milan team, it was Selvini Palazzoli (1989) who took this further and substituted "family game" for "system" as the basis for her theoretical framework. She sought a metaphor that took account of the intentionality of human subjects (albeit one that grossly over-simplifies the construction of personal subjectivity):

> "Thinking in terms of a game prevented us persisting in a typical fallacy inherent to systemic thought, namely ignoring the individual subject. One very helpful idea was ... comparing the family to ...

an organisation that has its own organisational chart, on which individual members are positioned in hierarchical order" (p.154). This concept of 'hierarchy' is not based on a consensus norm, as in functionalism, but on an individualised competitive struggle, one that is implicitly structured by the ideology of patriarchal capitalism. The concept of "game" is seen to relate to "that which is implied by common expressions such as *political game*, *power game*, *money game*, and the like" (ibid.).

Her individual subject is thus set up to play the "family game" in the same way that the hypothetical "rational economic man" maximised his advantage in his dealings in the market place. In this way, a systems theory that constructs people as pure objects is replaced by a game theory that constructs them as one-dimensional subjects - subjects that are so devoid of internal complexity that they might as well be considered as objects. Furthermore, this subjectivity is essentialised as 'human nature' - as "egocentricity" or "physiological self-interest". Each player is destined always to "vie for the most favourable position, both as regards his rank in the specific group to which he belongs (the nuclear family, for instance) and in each of the several outside groups of which he is also a member (the extended family, his work environment, the context of his leisure time, etc.)" (ibid. p.153).

The concept of "game" highlights the interdependency between the players, and hence links organisation at the scale of the individual to that of the collective (and to that of society as a whole). Like systems, games must have rules, and the players must co-operate in

establishing and maintaining the rules that then allow them to compete with each other for position. In this way, bourgeois individualism is still constrained within an assumption of order and regulation. The implication is that the rules are fair and that no-one is permitted to break them. In turn, the game is seen as taking place within a social and cultural order which has its own set of rules (rules which, by implication, reflect some sort of consensus):

> "The ... spiralling process of moves and countermoves ... obeys the strategies of more or less skilled participants (on the individual level), is conditioned by the opponent's moves (on the micro-systemic level), and by sociocultural rules (on the macro-systemic level)" (ibid. p.157).

Unlike systems theory, power relations assume central importance within the game model. However, the concept of power that is used is purely a bourgeois one - it is based on an individual's capacity to dominate others (and avoid domination by them), not on the degree to which a person is able to be in control of her/his own life and be interdependent with others (and not to be oppressed on account of her/his gender, age, race or class). Within the former understanding, a beautiful woman is seen as powerful in that she can use her looks to attract a rich man who will support her financially. Within the latter understanding, this would be seen as a demonstration of her structural powerlessness - the fact that, within a patriarchally dominated economic system, she is unlikely to be able to earn enough to be rich in her own right and has, in effect, to prostitute herself in order to ensure her material well-being. Thus, although the game model takes some note of

social roles and status in determining the power position of an individual family member, power is mainly seen as the result of the success or otherwise of the game moves that the person has so far made - it is thus much more to do with individual skills and capacities than with any notion of societal power structures:

> "Obviously, no player in a game has unidirectional power over the whole group of players. It is wrong, however ... to claim that power does not exist, that it is merely intrinsic to the rules of the game... In fact, there will be important differences in the degree of power (or freedom) possessed by each member of any group-with-history" (ibid p.158).

Evaluating the "game" as a metaphor for familial organisation against the criteria for a critical analysis, we find that it achieves only limited success. While it strives to make links between the scales of individual and family, this is only on the basis of ignoring the complexity of intrapsychic organisation and postulating the existence of a simplified bourgeois subject. It essentialises the nature of this subject and fails to theorise any processes whereby such a subject might be produced. Similarly, while it strives to reintroduce the historical dimension that was lacking in systems theory, the only history that is actually permitted into the analysis is the history of more or less successful game moves. Finally, although concepts of power are introduced, they relate only to individualised attributes (beauty, skill etc.), social roles and the success or otherwise of game moves - not in any real way to the inequalities of power that are embedded in the structuring of the social formation.

B) The Dance

Some feminists, struggling with attempts to reconcile an understanding of structural inequality with a systems approach to family work, have started to make use of a new metaphor: that of the "dance". This is a concept that seeks to integrate two notions of causality: the societal determination of the possibilities open to different family members and the systemic interactions that take place between them. Harriet Lerner gives a typical instance of a "dance" that structures the organisation of familial relations within the current patriarchal society:

> "The all-too-familiar dance, repetitively re-enacted by the distant husband/father, the child-focussed wife/mother, and the symptomatic child who is too loyal to grow herself up - is prescribed and perpetuated by the patriarchal societal system, just as this particular type of family organisation reinforces and perpetuates that same societal dysfunction" (1988 pp.50-1).

In this formulation, Lerner fails to escape from situating her analysis within a functionalist systems perspective. Thus 'the family' and 'society' are seen as two interacting scales of system, and patriarchy becomes reduced to being a "dysfunction" of both societal and familial systems, rather than a relation of unequal power that can structure organisations of any scale within the social formation. By taking away any historical or dialectical understanding of how specific power relations have come about and may be changed, political action becomes reduced to the technical manipulation of systems. Lerner argues that, just as "a dysfunctional *individual* can best be helped by disrupting and

changing the rigid rules, expectations and structures that inhibit growth in the family system", so "dysfunctional *families* can best be helped by disrupting the rigid rules, expectations and structures of patriarchal culture" (ibid. pp.51-2). Because this analysis remains so firmly rooted within a functionalist problematic that ultimately treats people as 'objects', it continues to ignore the subjectivity of oppressed family members and how this can provide the motive force for social transformation.

Pilalis and Anderton develop the metaphor of "dance" in a way that moves beyond such a functionalist perspective:

> "Feminist family therapy perceives males and females to be caught in a mutual 'dance'. The steps of the dance are choreographed by the dominant norms and values emanating from the social structure, unless the dancers are aware that they have the power and potential to choose to change the steps to meet the needs of their particular family configuration. The overall goal of therapy is to empower family members in relation to each other and to empower the family in relation to society. This goal is achieved by showing families that they can choose to assume more or less of the choreographer's power. In choosing which path to take, they need to identify the current restraints to assuming this power" (1986 pp.106-7).

Although this represents a significant step forward from conventional systems theory, it still fails to grasp the real nature of power relationships. Instead of seeing power relations as being constructed and renegotiated in struggles waged between individuals and groups within a specific social formation, it still situates power within the

traditional bourgeois dualism of 'individual' and 'society'. Some ethereal entity, "society" or "the choreographer" somehow has the power to dictate to individual men and women, who become hapless and innocent victims of this external power. This allows men and women to be seen as occupying fundamentally equal positions (both as equally caught in the "dance") and hence the fundamental systemic assumption of equal interactional influence need not be challenged.

In this way, empowerment is seen, not as the renegotiation of power relationships between groups or classes of people, but to be about empowering small scale units (the individual and the family - both seen as essentially untroubled by any form of internal contradiction) in relation to the large scale unit of "society". It is seen as women and men together against "the choreographer", rather than women renegotiating their relationships with men, of black people with white people, of working class people with the ruling class. Lois Braverman criticises such formulations for failing to shake off their uncritical acceptance of much of systemic epistemology and to acknowledge the full implications of a feminist analysis:

> "A feminist critique shakes the very precepts upon which our epistemology is based; it challenges the notion that men and women are equal participants in a relational dance... A feminist perspective demands that we take seriously the consequences of living in a patriarchal culture: marriage is not just an interactional scene, but a political institution reflective of the patriarchal culture in which it is immersed" (1988 p.6).

C) The psychoanalytic model

The theoretical model of psychoanalytic family therapy is an extension of object-relations psychoanalysis, and emphasises the parallels between individual subjectivity and that of a group, both seeming to be comprised of internal differences, and yet functioning as a single entity:

> "The Group tends to speak and react to a common theme as if it were a living entity, expressing itself in different ways through different mouths" (Foulkes and Anthony 1957 p.219).

The family unit is understood as a collective psyche, as an organisation within which "the demands of instinct and society, impulse and control, may be served by different family members" (Skynner 1981 p.60). In this way, each family member is seen as taking on specific roles, as the family as a whole endeavours to find a functional compromise between the satisfaction of instinctual desire and the demands of 'civilisation'. Just as the individual may deal with this conflict by the repression and splitting off of feelings, so it is suggested that within the family group, good and bad qualities may become split off and projected on to particular family members, some of whom may take on and act out "what is denied, forbidden and concealed" on behalf of the whole family - a process that is largely unconscious. In this way, the family is seen to be organised on the basis of patterns of repression, splitting and projections, analogous to those of the individual psyche. In both cases, the internal organisation may be seen as a defence against the disintegration or dissolution of a fragile unity: in the one case, the ego, and in the other, the family group.

As such processes of splitting and projection continue over time, repressed residues of past traumas and conflicts may become embedded in the pattern of family roles that continue to be re-enacted, at an unconscious level, in the here-and-now. However painful and destructive this may be, it may (unconsciously) be seen as preferable to the anxiety of facing up to these underlying issues. The dysfunctionality of a given familial organisation may be evaluated on the basis of the "particular ways that each family uses the processes of projective identification": whether intolerable feelings become "increasingly located in one member ... and tend to become exaggerated there", whether they are uncontained and lead to "quite primitive expressions of sexuality or violence", or whether the family unit becomes so locked together that "movements towards differentiation, on anyone's part, tend to be met by more or less violent reactions" (Box et al 1981 pp.155-6).

Although the content of this categorisation is different, its form is similar to that used by systems therapists in determining the 'functionality' of particular families. Instead of focusing on what are seen as deficiencies in communication or in the construction of subsystem boundaries, it focuses on how successful the family is in supressing and containing its emotional pain. However, as the approach glosses over the existence of any oppressive power relationships within the institution of the family (or within the social formation within which it is constituted), it may disregard what may be the very source of much of the emotional pain that has to be contained by the family - or, more specifically, by the structurally weaker members of the family: women and children. Fundamentally, it fails to enable those family

members experiencing emotional oppression to become aware of this or to contest and resist it.

On the face of it, the psychoanalytic model seems to be empowering in that it promotes choice, through the offering of insight and "engaging with the compulsive qualities, patterns and reactions, that constantly qualify or impede these possibilities" (Box et al 1981 p.60). However, only certain insights, and hence certain choices, are opened up. The weakness of the analysis is that, like systems theory, it is constructed within a functionalist problematic that essentialises and fails to question the existing power structure of the family. What is not explained is how one person comes to be in a position of power that enables them to force another to express their uncomfortable feelings for them. As we saw earlier, as long as processes of domination and resistance are excluded from the analysis, the mechanisms of projection remain somewhat of a mystery.

Evaluating the psychoanalytic model in the light of the criteria outlined at the start, we can see that this model is potentially useful in linking individual process to family process and vice versa, as the conceptual framework and the understanding of mechanisms is essentially the same. Projection is a process that is not exclusively intrapsychic or interpersonal - within a psychoanalytic approach, individual splits may be seen to be projected onto groups and group splits onto individuals. Furthermore there is a historical dimension in that current organisation is seen as reflecting past traumas and conflicts

(although this historical analysis, as with the present day analysis, takes no account of conflicts of power as a motive force for change).

Although the model does not transcend the subject/object dualism, it does deconstruct subjectivity to a degree. The 'individual' (and, for that matter, the 'family') are not seen as the free and uncomplicated subjects of bourgeois humanism. Nor are they seen as objects that may be manipulated and determined, as in a systems theory that is based on positivism. However, the terms of the analysis are such as to prevent a critical understanding of the role of social power relations in shaping the possibilities of subjectivity. As with individual psychoanalysis, the counterposing of the bourgeois terms 'instinct' and 'civilisation' leads to an acceptance of the inevitability of existing patterns of repression. Such an understanding of family conflict takes away any critical awareness of how this may be shaped by real differences of interest, and fought out between family members who may have unequal access to positions of structural power.

Instead, it becomes situated within a consensus view of the social order: one that, like systems theory, sees the social formation as naturally pre-given. It sees accommodation to the social order as essentially unproblematic, leading to the balanced and harmonious organisation of both the individual and the family. Dysfuntion is only seen to arise when socially unacceptable elements are not successfully suppressed or contained:

> "In the individual, dissociation of an emotion may lead to the impoverishment of normal functioning as well as the appearance of

> seemingly meaningless symptoms... In the group ... one member becomes the chosen (and to some extent self-chosen) container of some aspect of personality which is unacceptable to the others. This individual ... will be seen as, or will become disruptive" (Skynner 1981 p.65).

Such "disruptiveness" may start to challenge existing power structures in the family or society, but it is not seen as the purpose of therapy to make sense of any such challenge: quite the reverse, it must be accommodated within the existing social order. Although recognising that "excessive restriction of the lower by the higher" may lead to "forms of disturbance" and "lack of creativity", Skynner's theoretical framework nevertheless leads him to assert that any "breakdown of the authority structure ... leads to unco-ordinated release of tendencies which can be damaging to the whole system... Families operate best ...where the father is accorded ultimate authority" (ibid. pp.65-6).

Thus, the psychoanalytic model is useful in that it begins to connect family and individual process, to introduce a historical perspective and to deconstruct subjectivity. It moves beyond systems theory in starting to expose issues such as emotional repression, which point both to the problematic nature of subjectivity and to the distortion of emotionality that is part of family life. However, as with psychoanalytic perspectives on the individual, it requires to be be contextualised within an analysis of power relations if it is to provide the basis from which to develop a critical model of family organisation.

D) The gestalt model

Like the psychoanalytic approach, gestalt therapy extends its analysis of intra-psychic processes in order to understand processes at the scale of the family. It is largely ahistorical, concentrating almost exclusively on the process of what is and is not allowed into here-and-now awareness. This separation of what is in the "foreground" of experience and what is relegated to the "background" may be seen as a more flexible version of the psychoanalytic split between conscious and unconscious - one that includes not just the selective awareness of internal experiences but also the selective perception of what may be going on around. In general, it is assumed that the totality of a person's experience contains many elements that are in conflict with one another (for example, feeling angry with, and dependent on, the same person). Such co-existence of conflicting elements is likely to be even more prominent within the total experience of a family as a whole. Thus, although this approach was originally conceived as a way of understanding the individual, it may be seen as equally applicable to defining how a family is organised in terms of what experience is or is not allowed to come to the fore:

> "The same processes - bounded awareness and restricted peception of the environment - can be appreciated in a multi-person (family) context as generating an organisation... An observer may experience this phenomenon as a pervasive 'climate' or 'atmosphere' existing among the members... One person is not likely to be at ease while others are tense and anxious, and one member is not likely to act in a risky, self-acknowledging manner while others are 'disowning' and

'blaming'... The members mutually support a currently dominant organisation of experience" (Kaplan and Kaplan 1982 p.8).

Personal (and familial) organisation is understood in terms of how this co-existence of conflicting elements is managed: the "boundary" processes whereby contradictory elements are either kept in the background or are allowed to emerge and be dealt with. (Returning to the earlier example, an individual or a family may be organised, at a particular point in time, so as to prevent any emergence of anger, or alternatively, any sensation of dependence). Should a hidden element be sufficiently urgent as to break through, it may still be dismissed as irrelevant, disowned as too threatening or unrecognised because it is so different from what would normally be expected. Alternatively, it may be permitted into the foreground, forcing some process of confrontation and negotiation between the elements in conflict, leading to a change in how the person or the family organises their experience:

"Awareness grows ... by dancing to and fro between two points until satisfied... Often desires do not match. Then, conflict and struggle must be added as necssary steps in the process" (Kempler 1973 pp.62,67).

Although appearing to resemble a dialectical understanding of social change, this model of productive conflict is predicated upon a bourgeois view of the person (or family) as an "organism ... that is in balance and that has to function properly" (Perls 1969 p.16), a perspective that totally ignores the impact of power inequalities upon the construction of subjectivity. Thus, the gestalt approach uses a similarly

functionalist perspective as that of systems theory or psychoanalysis. Organisation is understood simply in terms of how flexible or rigid is the boundary process. Dysfunction is seen as arising from excessive rigidity, preventing family or individual from being open to their existing and new experiences, and hence being able to grow as a "healthy organism". Just as, within the psyche, elements that are in opposition to the current organisation of experience may be blocked out by a rigid boundary process, so a similarly rigid boundary may be established within the organisation of a family through a combination of projection and introjection between family members:

> "In a family, the interactive patterns can be stabilized or 'locked in' ... through disowning the opposite [experience] and/or projecting it onto others. The mechanism complementary to projection is introjection, which involves incorporating into the self characteristics perceived in others or acquiescing to attributions to self made by others... Projection and introjection function in a given family to produce rigidified relationships among members" (Kaplan and Kaplan 1978 p.197).

However, there is no analysis of why particular people or families should have developed such rigid boundaries around their experience, and how this might relate to structures of internal and external oppression.

The process of therapy focusses entirely on here-and-now process. The therapist seeks to support family members in taking the risk of expressing previously repressed elements of their experience, and may suggest "experiments" that heighten people's awareness of issues and clarify their discomfort and frustration. This may then spur family

members on to negotiate a resolution of these issues. However, it is assumed, since no allowance is made for power issues and the internalisation of oppression, that each family member is responsible for their own feelings, thoughts and actions. Sometimes the naivety of this may be productive, since it may enable people to recognise the extent to which they may sabotage their own power, over and above the degree of real powerlessness that is imposed on them in the current family situation. Powerlessness may be exacerbated by feelings such as confusion, depression or guilt, and by transactions such as blaming, excusing, or speaking for (and through) others, since these get in the way of awareness, assertion and negotiation. However, the assumption of total individual responsibility may itself block awareness of real power inequalities and may inadvertently reinforce self-blame, for example by leading a woman to ask herself, "Why can't I stand up for myself the way my husband does?", without enabling her to see why this may be the result of a material difference in their power positions.

While the gestalt approach focuses on 'healthy' family functioning, it differs from systems or psychoanalytic models in that it does not seek to accommodate potentially disruptive elements to a pre-given social order, but sees growth as resulting from the unfettered expression of desire and the open confrontation and negotiation of issues:

> "When there is no desire, conversation is hollow or absent. When the desire is not defined, the conversation cannot take meaningful form. Desire, clearly expressed and movingly delivered brings change in its wake... The entire course of therapy is characterised

> by a search ... for the immediate desire not yet expressed (Kempler 1973 pp.32-3).

This illustrates the underlying tension in the gestalt approach as viewed from the perspective of critical theory: on the one hand, it sees awareness and the working through of conflict and contradiction as the motive force for change, while, on the other it sees this process as taking place within the an unproblematic context of apparently equal power relations in which the full expression of feeling *by any member of the family* is seen as sufficient to bring about change. While the directness and simplicity of the gestalt model of family process may be very potent in guiding the therapist into issues of empowerment, and in enabling oppressed family members to articulate what they have previously been too frightened to express, its naive humanism fails to support them in dealing with the totality of their structural powerlessness. Unlike the psychoanalytic approach, this model does not start to theorise the structural conflicts underlying the concept of the pure autonomous subject, nor to take seriously people's history of oppressive experience. Nevertheless, its conceptualisation of the organisation of family and individual experience would seem to have something to offer a critical practice, if it could be contextualised within an understanding of the real power relations of the social formation.

7: 'THE FAMILY' AS A SUBJECTIVITY: TOWARDS A NEW THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, I will develop a concept of familial organisation that derives, not from systems theory, but from a critical analysis of the power relations by which 'the family' is constructed, and which it actively reproduces. This is the concept of 'subjectivity' which, as we have seen, has provided a way of understanding the complex and contradictory construction of 'the individual'. It is a concept by which it will be possible to bring together our understanding of how social institutions are constructed on the basis of power relations and our discussion of the specfic material, ideological and emotional processes that determine familial organisation. Moving forward from this, we can utilise the conceptual link that 'subjectivity' can provide between processes at the scale of individual and family, and thereby start to reformulate the family-as-psyche metaphors discussed in the previous Chapter. In this way, it is hoped to lay the theoretical foundation for a more critical therapeutic practice.

As was discussed earlier, the family may be seen as an institution within civil society which, although being outside the direct control of the ruling class or the State, nevertheless acts as a crucial arena, both for domination and also for resistance. While, on the one hand, through systems of inheritance, it serves to reproduce class inequalities, and the ideological components that underpin them, the family can also be an instrument of solidarity and struggle. Within racist ideologies that give superiority to 'white' lineages, the

institution of the family simultaneously acts as the means of oppression of black people, but also a primary unit of mutual support and consciousness raising. Within the operation of patriarchy, the family may be seen to be the most crucial site of struggle between the organising principles of hierarchy and web: the dominant organisation being one of 'power over', working downwards from the position of the male household head, but always being contested by the possibilities of 'power together' through mutual cooperation and personal support - an organisation of family life that is primarily fought for by women.

We have seen how, within a given social formation, the parameters of family life are already established: the 'family' is, first and foremost, an institution that is constructed within the context of patriarchal, racial and class struggle. Thus, under particular social formations, specific slots exist for 'the family' to occupy - people are not free to set up a 'family' in any way that they want. They have little choice but to organise themselves according to the specific 'blueprint' that already exists for them, given their race, class, gender and age positions, if they are to be able to participate in the wider network of already existing social relations. If they fail to do this, they must engage in an endless struggle to establish a new form, a struggle that is waged not only with external pressures and constraints, but also with their own internalised preconceptions of 'family'.

In our earlier discussion, we have seen how, at the scale of the person, subjectivity comprises not a single consistent subject position, but an ensemble of often jarring and contradictory subject positions (such as

roles and ego states) which are brought together and lived as if they constituted a unitary whole. In order to survive and to participate in the specific structures of the social formation, the person must insert her/himself into the slots that are available to him/her. S/he must be constituted as an apparently free and automonous agent: one who is subjected (and willingly subjects her/himself) to the relations of wage and domestic labour that exploit and oppress her/him. Similarly, in discursive and emotional transactions, s/he must construct her/himself as a consistent subject by repressing dissonant or contradictory elements of her/his personality. Thus, within a patriarchal social formation, a man has little choice but to take on the subject position of appearing rational, capable and in control - and distanced from the intimacy of family life. By contrast, the primary subject position that is open to a woman is located firmly within the institution of the family, as being the one who has to be warm, empathic and expressive.

The precise organisation of a person's subjectivity may be seen to be the product of a process of struggle and negotiation. This must be understood, not in terms of a simplistic bourgeois opposition between instinctual forces or essential qualities on the one hand, and societal expectations on the other (as in the Freudian problematic), but in a way that acknowledges the split and contradictory nature of both 'society' and 'individual' - with the organisation of each representing just a specific moment in a process of historical struggle. The constitution of personal subjectivity may thus be seen to reflect a moment in the internal struggle between disparate elements of personality - desires, capacities and internalised messages - negotiated against the (often

contradictory) subject positions that are available to the person within prevailing discourses and emotional and material practices. Each such position is not entirely fixed, and there may be some room for manoeuvre to accommodate particular elements of personality. For example, an Afro-British, working class man may have to choose to insert himself into one of a range of subject positions constructed within racist discourses (for example, 'Black Macho', 'Token Black', 'Soul Man', etc.), but may nevertheless be able to renegotiate the subject position so that it is not entirely oppressive and may allow some (albeit limited) expression of his own original desires, ideas and activity.

Whereas psychoanalytic models of psychic processes have proved insufficient as metaphors for familial organisation, the concept of subjectivity, if applied to the family as a whole, could provide the basis for a critical understanding which places power relations at the centre of the analysis. It is possible to view the family-household system as a subjectivity in its own right: it too is a jarring aggregate of conflicting subject positions that is nevertheless constituted (and must actively constitute itself) as a consistent, dependable unit, in order that it may engage in economic production and consumption, discursive relations and emotional transactions. Within different historical and cultural contexts, family life may be seen to have been inserted into already existing slots as subject within a variety of discourses and sets of material or emotional transactions. Let us proceed in our examination of the family as a subjectivity in its own right, by considering first the external factors, and then the internal mechanisms, by which it is constructed.

External Determination of Family Subjectivity

Families are constructed as collective class or racial subjects: their subjectivity as 'black' or 'white', working class or bourgeois, determines their collective position with regard to sets of power relations. In a racist social formation, a 'white' family is inserted into a slot that situates it in a position of dominance over those who are forced to transact from the subordinated position of a 'black' family. The power of racism in determining the organisation of family subjectivity is particularly evident in the instance of mixed race families. There is no possibility of their constructing a subjectivity for themselves which is non-racial and they may end up in the confusing position of being constituted as 'black' in their dealings with 'white' families, and 'white' in their dealings with 'black' families.

Within the social relations of capitalism, a family is inserted into a common class position as a collective subjectivity: a wife and children typically become bracketed in with the class position of a man (as long as they remain part of the family unit) and their occupational positions are conventionally seen as of secondary importance. Thus a secretary who is married to a manager is incorporated into the organisation of a subjectivity that places her in a fundamentally different class position from her colleague who is married to a clerk. However, in the instance where a woman (or child) occupies an economically superior class position to that of a man, contradictions are exposed between the organising principles of capitalism and patriarchy, resulting in uneasy

conflicts in how family members should situate themselves, and how they are situated by others, in outside transactions (see McRae 1986).

It is the relations of patriarchy that fundamentally determine the internal organisation of the slots available for family subjectivity to occupy. Whereas racism and capitalism place all family members on an equal footing in relation to external relations of domination or subordination, patriarchy produces the 'blueprint' of the internal structure of 'the family' within a specific historical and cultural context. Firstly, there is the assumption that the primary sexual relationships within 'families' will be between men and women - part of a wider ideology of heterosexism. Secondly, in each 'family' unit, an adult man is placed in a position of domination over women, children and any other male members of the household. (In the absence of a man, a family will tend to be structured around the 'lack' of such a figure).

As we saw earlier, 'the family' may or may not be constituted as an economic subject, depending on the social formation. Feudal society was organised on the basis of economic relationships between *families* rather than *individuals*. It was aristocratic families (and not individuals within them) who were in a position to exploit the labour power of peasant families (as a unit, not individually). In this way, it may be seen that, for both classes, the available economic subject positions were for families as organised units. By contrast, under relations of slavery, the labour of family members was controlled and exploited on an individual basis, so the black family was situated as an economic subject only in relation to the physical reproduction of labour power.

The external construction of family subjectivity is different again under the economic relations of patriarchal capitalism. Here, there is a constant tension between the deconstruction of the family as an economic subject (with the creation of individual work subjects in the capitalist wage labour market) and its maintenance within the material structures of patriarchy (particularly in the neo-feudal organisation of domestic labour and consumption). In a real sense, the prior construction of the family as an economic subject continues to determine the participation of women in the labour market - they often do so, not as discrete individuals in their own right, but as secondary earners who come in and out of the labour market according to the requirements of the family as a collective economic subjectivity.

However, with the transition from feudalism to capitalism, the primary demarcation of the empty slot that the 'family' must occupy is not so much economic as ideological - arising from its crucial position as an institution within the structures of civil society. As we have seen, real groups of people of whatever race or class have to construct themselves in relation to a normative conception of 'the family', one which, although the subject of continual political struggle, mainly reflects the interests of the white bourgeois man - and can exist in marked contradiction with the realities of material and emotional survival. Just as individuals have to live the illusion that they are free autonomous subjects, so people who share their lives together have little option but to live the illusion that they have chosen to operate as a 'family' - an autonomous unit that may be held responsible for the activity of its members (in accordance with the prevailing norm):

> "The concept of family is a socially necessary illusion which simultaneously expresses and masks recruitment to relations of production, reproduction and consumption... Our notations of family absorb the conflicts, contradictions and tensions actually generated by these material, class-structured relations... 'Family', as we understand (and misunderstand) the term ... serves as a shock-absorber to keep households functioning ... yet the families they have (or don't have) are not the same" (Rapp 1982 p.170).

Thus, although they may seem to be inserted into the same ideological slot, the reality of family life can be very different for the working class and the bourgeoisie, and for black families and white families.

A bourgeois man can earn sufficient to construct his family as a single economic subject dependent on his income, and so economic and ideological pressures converge to insert other family members firmly within the organisation of the patriarchal ideal. By contrast, capitalist wage rates have rarely been sufficient for a man to support a family on a single income, so working class families have very often depended on women and older children entering independently into the wage labour process. This reality of having to construct themselves, at least partially, as individual work subjects, can be in direct contradiction to a hegemonic ideology that defines the family as a single unitary subjectivity - as an organisation of dependants around a male 'breadwinner'. It is in order to live the image of 'family' that working family members have to deny their individual subjectivities and redefine their activity as marginal, secondary and supplementary 'contribution to the household'. The contradiction and incompatibility

between the material and ideological slots into which the working class family is inserted can lead to great stress and tension for those whose task it is somehow to 'hold it together'. Women are invited to feel guilty that they are neglecting the practical and emotional maintenance of the home in order to go out to work, even though the physical survival of the family may depend on this. Working class men still feel pushed to fight for a 'family wage' - although they seldom get one - and they experience their inability to provide for the whole family as a slight on their masculinity.

Under patriarchal capitalism, hegemonic ideology also defines the slot into which a family must insert itself as an emotional subject. Discourses of romanticisation have 'elevated' the family unit into a 'haven against a heartless world': the correct (and only) location for intimacy, warmth and caring (however stifling this may actually be in practice). According to this 'blueprint' for the construction of emotional subjectivity, all such caring is to be provided by women. The corollary of this is the lack of any expectation that the world of work should provide any emotional comfort or desiring contact. Constructing itself, and constraining itself, as a subjectivity is inherently stressful for both a working class and a bourgeois family, but the nature of the stresses tend to be different: while the primary stress for the working class family in maintaining its subjectivity is economic, this may paradoxically reduce stress at an emotional level, since family members who are forced to go out to work (albeit guiltily) are at least given some release from the emotional claustrophobia that characterises the privatised bourgeois family.

The formation of a family as a subjectivity

We have already seen how a young person has to learn to construct her/himself as a subjectivity within whatever subject positions are available, so as to be able to participate in the emotional, material and discursive relations of the social formation into which s/he has been inserted. Parallel processes take place in relation to the formation of a new family as a transacting subjectivity. Within all patriarchal social formations, this unit must be constructed on the basis of an unequal relationship between women and men - thereby excluding the possibility of lesbian or gay households. Within feudal societies, the dominant emphasis would be on the construction of a viable collective economic subjectivity. Both aristocrats and peasants would arrange their marriages primarily on this basis, with crucial significance being given to the economic transaction between the two families of origin (the dowry payment) that would set up the new family as a viable economic unit, and would also guarantee the (male) line of inheritance. This economic transaction and the exact boundaries of the new economic unit, would be established and legitimated through specific practices at the ideological level: religious and secular ceremonies that marked the construction of the new family as a subject in its own right. Within feudal ideologies, there would often be no illusion of choice: marriages would simply be arranged by the respective families.

Under patriarchal capitalism, family subjectivity is constructed under the illusion of choice: just as individuals 'choose' to be exploited within the wage labour process, so people 'choose' to form themselves

into family units, and hence to organise domestic and wage labour, consumption and emotional intimacy as a single organised entity. As Gittins argues, this ideology of individual 'choice' serves to mask the unequal, oppressive and exploitative nature of familial organisation:

> "By insisting that happy marriages ... are made by individuals through love ... the reality of the economic and patriarchal bases of marriage and family life are disguised and ignored" (1985 p.161).

Within patriarchal capitalist ideology, it is, of course, women who have to 'choose' to be exploited within the domestic labour process, 'choose' to come last in terms of priorities for consumption and 'choose' to seek only a 'second income' within the wage labour process. This 'choice' is framed within the various discourses that romanticise marriage and family life (such as those in films and magazines), while simultaneously pathologising any alternatives. Choosing to remain single is redefined as having been "left on the shelf", while choosing a partner of the same sex, or choosing not to have children, is defined as being deviant, abnormal or irresponsible. Weedon suggests that the seductive nature of marriage and motherhood can only be explained by an analysis of the available slots into which women may insert their subjectivity:

> "In order to understand why women so willingly take on the role of wife and mother, we need a theory of the relationship between subjectivity and ... the range of possible *normal* subject positions open to women, and the power and powerlessness invested in them... The positions of wife and mother, though subject to male control, also offer forms of power - the power to socialise children, to run the house and to be the power behind the throne" (1987 p.18-9).

Despite a recent temporary wavering in the value put on the institution of marriage, the ideology surrounding "starting a family" has remained very much intact. Gay and alternative households face massive problems in negotiating any subject positions from which to operate. They have no access to marriage rituals and face discrimination and annihilation within prevailing legal and media discourses (for example, in the instance of lesbian mothers seeking custody of their children).

Once living together, or entering into marriage, heterosexual couples (and their children) have little alternative but to construct themselves as a single responsible subjectivity. This has been effected partly through State discourses that have constructed them as a unit for the purposes of income maintenance (and, until recently, of taxation). But, more powerfully, it is through their entry into the discourses of civil society - their interaction with other family units - that they must constitute themselves as a single subjectivity, in relation to the prevailing normative 'blueprint' of how a family should be. (For example, single parent families have to construct themselves as if they were families-with-one-parent-missing.) However, the responsibility for holding the family together falls unequally. While it is the man's responsibility to provide the 'family wage', it is the woman who is typically seen as responsible for all other aspects of maintaining the image of 'family':

> "Because it is women who are identified with the family, who are allocated primary responsibility for its well-being, unity and happiness, failure to achieve such goals is overwhelmingly seen as a woman's problem and failure - her guilt" (Gittins 1985 p.165).

Internal Mechanisms

Let us now move on to an examination of the internal mechanisms whereby the family constructs and maintains itself as a subjectivity. Essentially the same mechanisms may be seen to operate at the scales of both individual and family. A person is only able to live the illusion of unitary subjectivity by a process of systematic misrecognition and selective repression: blocking out experience if it fails to fit in with an internalised frame of reference derived from prevailing ideology. A degree of consistency is maintained by excluding all or part of certain subject positions from the person's repertoire of internal and external transactions (and hence from conscious awareness) once the person establishes her/himself as a subject in discourse. As we have seen in the psychoanalytic and gestalt approaches to family therapy, such a split between conscious and unconscious, or foreground and background, can also make sense in terms of conceptualising what is and is not expressed within the organisation of family subjectivity: unacceptable subject positions may be discounted and excluded in order for an illusion of coherence and consistency to be kept up.

From this perspective, it may be seen how it may be possible, with certain configurations of internal power relations, for the individual subjectivity of a family member to be rendered entirely mute and passive within the external (or internal) transactions of the family. S/he may actually be spoken for or overlooked, or may speak and act entirely as s/he is expected to do by the rest of the family. More commonly, it might only be part of each individual subjectivity that is excluded,

with certain sorts of transaction either not being permitted at all, or only to be expressed by certain family members and not others. The expression of anger, the open negotiation of differences and the use of touch (for support or intimidation) are all examples of types of transactions at different levels that may or may not be permitted above the transactional horizon of particular families.

Just as we have been able to theorise the minute-by-minute organisation of personal subjectivity in terms of driver-adaptations, so it is instructive to apply these concepts to the subjectivity of a family. In the same way that an individual deals with a fear of being rejected from participation in outside discourses by organising their subjectivity so as to Please, Hurry Up or whatever, so a family subjectivity may be seen to deal with stress in a similar manner. A black family living on a white-dominated housing estate may make the collective adaptation to Please Others, and, in doing so, restrict their transactional repertoire, particularly at the level of activity (the 'trap' level for the Please driver-adaptation). While a whole family may adopt the same driver-adaptation, it may also assume a specific configuration of adaptations, with different family members taking on particular aspects of this. For example, in order to fit in with patriarchal as well as racist social structures, the above family might adopt a configuration of the man organising himself according to the Be Strong or Be In Control drivers, the woman organising herself according to the Please or Hurry Up drivers, and the children organising themselves according to the Try Hard or Be Perfect drivers.

Painful issues and unacceptable conflicts may be suppressed below a family's transactional horizon if a family subjectivity becomes organised according to more extreme versions of driver-adaptations. Family members may retreat (or be forced) into making only predictable and ritualised transactions with one another from role positions (such as Victim, Persecutor or Rescuer): in this way, "their interlinked interactions perpetuate passivity" (Massey 1983 p.33). Real concerns and emotions are not expressed or dealt with, and family members only allow themselves to experience various superficial "racket" feelings, and the sets of thoughts and behaviours that go with them. It is through manoeuvring in this way that those already in positions of power may maintain the status quo (particularly by making use of the Persecutor role position). However, family members who are too intimidated and powerless to be able to bring about any productive change within the family, may nevertheless make use of role positions such as Victim (or Rescuer) to exert some control over the day-to-day life of the family - albeit only to the extent of hooking other family members into an unpleasant experience of stalemate as well. A woman who is so depressed that she has taken on the Victim role may, in turn, succeed in inviting her husband into the Rescuer role (feeling over-burdened and guilty), or the Persecutor role (being punitive, but in a predictable way). Such manouevres and manipulations, while failing to address the real issues of oppression within the family, can nevertheless have a powerful determining influence on family organisation.

The concept of projection is also useful in understanding how family subjectivity is constructed and maintained, particularly at the level of emotionality. As we have seen, this concept has been developed both within the traditions of Gestalt therapy and object-relations psychoanalysis, but requires to be reformulated on the basis of a critical understanding of familial power relations, in order to explain why some family members are more vulnerable than others to accepting projections. As we have seen, projection is a process whereby unacceptable elements that are excluded from one person's subjectivity may be relocated within, and expressed by, another's subjectivity. Such transfers may be between subjectivities at the same scale (e.g. one family member expressing the anger of another family member). They may also take place between subjectivities at different scales. An unacceptable family conflict may be projected onto one individual (leading perhaps to the most vulnerable family member acting in a disturbed and contradictory manner). Similarly, an intra-psychic split within one powerful individual may be imposed on the subjectivity of the family as a whole (with different family members taking on the expression of opposite sides of the split at the expense of being able to express any other feelings). If a powerful family member has a difficulty with his/her anger, the whole family could be forced to take this on, perhaps with some family members repressing all expressions of anger, and other family members continually expressing anger that is not their own.

As became clear in our earlier discussion of the mechanisms of projection, the process may be seen to depend on whether or not it may

actually suit the recipient of the projection (at an unconscious level) to take this on, or whether the projector is in a position of relative power, due to ideological, material or emotional factors, so that s/he can impose the projection onto an unwilling recipient. Thus women may be seen to be particularly vulnerable to accepting projections from men, and children may be forced to accept projections from parents, with girls being significantly more vulnerable than boys.

Vulnerable family members may perceive intuitively that one way of gaining a limited degree of power and recognition is to take on and act out a projection on behalf of the family as a whole. Where some important element is consistently excluded from the family subjectivity, such as the expression of grief, or the resolution of conflicts, one family member may take this issue on and, in some way, act it out. Given the typical organisation of male subjectivity, a boy may act out an apparently powerful element, such as anger, as this will fit in with the organisation of his personal subjectivity. (For example, he might become involved in delinquency). By contrast, girls and women are more likely to express elements of pain and vulnerability, because their subjectivity is organised to be open to the feelings of others. Either way, whatever apparent influence or recognition may result from the taking on of such projections, the process is ultimately self-destructive in that it denies any degree of genuine recognition for the person concerned. It is no coincidence that the 'Identified Patient', whose personal distress or disorder may bring a family to the notice of professional agencies, is most frequently a member of a subordinated group: a woman or a child.

Repeated patterns of projection may establish systems of collusion. This produces a locked-in pattern of relationships that are symbiotic in that the full repertoire of subject positions are not available to each person. Instead, one person may be permitted to express anger (on behalf of everyone), while another has to do all the thinking and problem solving, and a third does all the nurturing and looking after. In such a way, a family can become enmeshed with each totally dependent on another, either to express their feelings, to do their thinking, or to care for them. From a critical perspective, it may be seen that such a symbiosis is a highly effective mechanism in cementing together an otherwise fragile unity, so that it can achieve the necessary coherence in order to participate in ideological and economic structures.

The insertion of a family within external ideological structures may also maintain and reproduce family subjectivity as a symbiosis that precludes certain family members from undertaking particular forms of transaction. There has been a long history of marginalising or mishearing the independent voice of children within family discourse. An extreme example of this is the Victorian bourgeois maxim that 'children should be seen and not heard', indicating that the voice of children was felt to be a very serious threat indeed to the unitary 'respectable' family subjectivity that they wished to construct. 'Baby talk', the deliberate teaching by adults of a substitute, non-adult vocabulary when dealing with young children, may also be seen to be a way of sabotaging the ability of children to be heard as credible alternative voices that could undermine or contradict the family subjectivity established by parents.

The (sexual) desires of children have often been repressed or misconstrued within adult-dominated family discourse. For example, within the eighteenth Century aristocratic family in France, although children's sexuality was not repressed, they were not allowed a space within family discourse to express their desire as a subject, but instead were treated only as an object, "a sexual pet to be played with for adult amusement" (Poster 1978 p.182). By contrast, in the bourgeois family of the nineteenth Century, great efforts were made to construct discourses that would abolish any expression of childhood sexuality. Myths were constructed and promulgated that masturbation (by either gender) would lead to impotence, blindness, insanity or even death. Such discourses were backed up by the threat of employing painful and horrific mechanical devices, and even of surgery. Thus, in this period, efforts were made both to distort the significance of any expression of children's sexuality (by situating it within a pseudo-medical discourse that described it as if it were part of a disease process) and, if possible, to suppress its expression altogether (see Foucault 1981).

There is evidence that similar discursive processes operate in relation to gender in families. Women and men are inserted within different vocabularies. Women tend to have available to them a more sophisticated vocabulary in describing such areas as feelings and personal relationships. Men tend to have a greater facility with a technical or 'instrumental' vocabulary. Women's discourse tends to emphasise domestic relations whereas men's discourse tends to emphasise external events and actions. However, under patriarchal social relations, these respective discourses do not constitute split but equally valued aspects

of family subjectivity. Instead, within the overall discourse of patriarchy, women's discourse is discounted as 'gossip' or 'rabbiting on', whereas 'men's talk' is seen as having priority, and women are expected to remain silent if men want to converse.

The conventional construction of the nuclear family, as idealised by Talcott Parsons, is an excellent example of a symbiosis that restricts the transactional abilities of both men and women, although men are maintained in a clear position of 'power over'. If a woman is only allowed access to 'expressive' subject positions, she must force herself to collapse in a heap of anxiety and confusion when faced with an electrical plug. She thus remains dependent on her husband to fulfil the complementary 'instumental' role. Thus her apparent inability to function effectively as a separate subjectivity serves to reinforce her dependence on, and hence her commitment to maintain, the collective subjectivity of her family. Similarly, the husband has to force himself to repress his own emotionality and allow his feelings to be vicariously (and perhaps inaccurately) projected through his wife's 'expressive' subject positions. Again, his distortion of his own subjectivity serves to maintain the symbiotic organisation and apparent coherence of the family as a subjectivity. While such arrangements have the appearance of being entered into mutually, women (and men) may have little choice if their family is to participate in the wider social relations of a patriarchal capitalist social formation. However, in the last instance, it is clearly much more in the interests of men to maintain and uphold such an arrangement - a subjectivity whose appearance of unity systematically excludes the dissenting voices of women and children.

Subjectivity, System and Psyche: A Comparison of Metaphors

Both the metaphors of 'subjectivity' and 'system' conceptualise ways in which the activity, emotionality and discourse of family members is constrained by their membership of a family unit. However, the metaphor of 'system' fails to explain any mechanism for why particular constraints should exist - they are seen as somehow 'natural' and functional to the harmonious organisation of 'society' (itself seen as similarly 'natural' and unproblematic). By contrast, the metaphor of 'subjectivity' implies and incorporates an understanding of the (historically changing) processes that bring about their existence, processes that may be analysed in terms of how they are determined by relations of 'power over' and 'power together' between people. In turn, the use of the metaphor of subjectivity may be seen to bring about the possibility of therapeutic intervention being directed towards enabling subordinated groups to renegotiate familial organisation into fundamentally less oppressive (or more mutually supportive) forms.

As with 'system', 'subjectivity' may also be applied in conceptualising smaller constituent units within a family. Just as Minuchin refers to spouse and parenting sub-systems, so it would seem meaningful to conceive of women and men being slotted into already existing, ideologically sanctioned subject positions as husband-and-wife and as mother-and-father: subject positions that constrain them with regard to their participation in a variety of material, emotional and discursive transactions, both inside and outside the family. Within prevailing

forms of family organisation there is a less well defined slot for children to be inserted into as a collective subject position (equivalent to a sibling sub-system). There are fewer situations in which siblings are conventionally expected to speak as if with one voice, or be held collectively responsible for their actions. Such relative autonomy may well have been more common among large working class families of the nineteenth century where older siblings were expected to take a large measure or responsibility in looking after and controlling their younger brothers and sisters, and the sibling subjectivity as a whole might often be punished for the misdemeanours of any of their number. With the hegemony of the bourgeois family form, such differentiation is less common, with virtually all responsibility for family functioning being placed on parents, particularly the mother.

On occasion, other subjectivies may emerge within a family organisation, based on a common position with regard to particular sets of transactions. The 'men' of the family (father and older sons) may adopt a common set of rights and privileges, perhaps to do with household tasks (what they will and will not do), or to do with their 'right' to have a social life outside the home (leaving 'the women' in charge of looking after any dependent family members). Perhaps in response to such common experience of subordination, the women in the family might forge some sense of collective identity - based on (some degree of) transactions of mutual recognition. Similarly, in a family where the father is sexually abusive, the daughters (or children of both sexes) may organise themselves as a subjectivity and try to resist their abuse collectively rather than individually.

The metaphor of 'subjectivity' shares with psychanalytic and gestalt metaphors of 'psyche' a theoretical linkage between processs operating at the scale of family and individual, but contextualises these within an understanding of power relations. The degree of shared theoretical heritage means that it should be possible to incorporate into a model based on 'subjectivity' a number of theoretical concepts and practical techniques from these approaches (albeit with some reformulation). The theoretical concepts that seem most relevant are those of projection and introjection, and the splitting into conscious/unconscious or foreground/background (reformulated as a transactional horizon). Once contextualised within an understanding of power relations, psychoanalysis provides a useful account of how historical oppression may be embedded in the current organisation of a family. At a practical level, techniques for supporting the emergence of previously repressed experience (particularly from the gestalt approach) could be of great value.

Where the metaphor of subjectivity is superior to these other two approaches is in its ability to situate both the organisations of individual and family as moments in a process of struggle - a struggle that is an instance of wider conflicts within the structural power relations of the social formation. In turn, this opens up the possibility of analysing the extent to which changes in family organisation are (or are not) empowering, both for the family as a whole in its dealings with external structures, and for those family members who are particularly oppressed within the existing organisation of subjectivity.

8: THEORISING THE BREAKDOWN OF SUBJECTIVITY

Conventionally, family therapy has been used as a response to some perceived breakdown in the functioning of either the whole family or one family member (or both). In practice, such a breakdown tends to be conceived of as an arbitrary cut-off point along a continuum between what is seen as 'normal', 'healthy' functioning at one extreme, and what is seen as 'pathological' or 'deviant' at the other. Breakdown is thus a failure to live up to social norms that are seen as essentially unproblematic and in the best interests of all family members. Common scenarios for family therapy intervention would be the neurotic or psychotic breakdown of one family member, the incidence of violence or abuse within the family, or delinquency and criminality committed by family members outside the family. A systems perspective does help to situate a breakdown of functioning at the scale of one individual as part of a disturbance in relationships in her/his context of living. However, all this achieves is to shift the location of deviancy or pathology from the scale of the individual to that of the family. It is therefore important that we develop a concept of breakdown that is not based on a model of normality/deviancy, but which takes account of just how problematic so called 'normal' family functioning actually is.

Let us return to our definition of subjectivity: it represents an ensemble of subject positions, each with their distinct and conflicting possibilities for transacting, that is nevertheless constructed so that it appears to transact as a consistent unity - to speak as if it were one voice, and to take responsibility for all its actions. This

illusory degree of coherence is necessary if the person or family is to be able to participate within the social or economic relations of the prevailing social formation. It is achieved and maintained by the squeezing of divergent elements into the subject positions that are available to it within its particular discursive, economic and emotional context. Thus a family (or person), although comprising an aggregate of conflicting subject positions, nevertheless is constituted, and must actively constitute itself, as a consistent, dependable and responsible unit that is organised in relation to participation in wage and domestic labour, and in legal or social discourses.

As we have already seen, the precise nature of subjectivity is the product of a process of ongoing struggle and conflict. Its organisation arises from the negotiation of conflicting internal elements (desires, capacities and previously internalised messages), in relation to the variety of often contradictory subject positions that may be available to it. The positions that are potentially available are determined by the structural position of the person or family within the social formation - but each position, although crucially determined by oppressive power relations, is nevertheless open to subtle renegotiation and manoeuvring. Living as a subjectivity within an oppressive social formation is always fragile and fraught, involving, on the one hand, the continual frustration of patricular desires, thoughts and activities, and, on the other, a constant effort to 'paper over the the cracks' so as to maintain the illusion that the subjectivity is something that has been freely and actively chosen, and for which the family or individual may be held responsible. There may come a point where it becomes too

much of an effort to keep up the image of a unitary subjectivity, which then begins to fall apart and no longer function in the ideologically and economically prescribed manner.

The phenomenon of 'breakdown' may be understood, not as a specified degree of deviance from a 'healthy' norm, but as the point at which a person or family ceases to be recognisable as the autonomous, responsible and consistent subject that is required of them if they are to be free to participate in the prevailing social formation. It is at this point that they may become conspicuous to friends or neighbours, and outside agencies may become involved. Whether it is requested or not, such outside involvement can become inevitable, since the breakdown of subjectivity will be fundamentally disturbing and seditious to the social order of the particular social formation. For example, under patriarchal capitalism, madness may be seen to threaten the supposedly rational basis of the social order (see Foucault 1967). Similarly, criminality undermines the legal underpinnings of an unequal distribution of property rights.

What actually constitutes a 'breakdown' depends, not on the degree of distress experienced, but on whether the response to this distress places the person or family outside the ensemble of subject positions that are considered acceptable for them to occupy within a specific social formation. For example, child sexual abuse only represents a breakdown of family subjectivity if it occurs within a social formation which provides a range of subject positions (albeit distorted) from which victims may speak and be heard (for example within social work and

legal discourses). Thus, within the present configuration of the social formation, a man's sexual abuse of his children is now more likely to be disclosed and heard, thereby placing his family outside the slot that is prescribed for it within ideology. By contrast, at present, a man's sexual abuse of his wife is less likely to have such an effect. As we have seen earlier, her voice is not so likely to be heard within policing or legal discourses, which currently construct her as having 'consented' to any such abuse by her agreement to the 'contract' of marriage.

Individual and one-off instances of strange or deviant behaviour by a family member do not, of themselves, constitute a breakdown of family subjectivity - as long as the rest of the family is able to use some form of persuasion or coercion in order to bring them back into line with what is deemed acceptable. However, taken to extremes, such courses of action may affect not just the family member's own subjectivity, but also threaten collective family subjectivity. The family of a persistently delinquent child, who are shown in Court to be unable to exercise 'proper care and control' over her/him, are also experiencing the breakdown of their collective subjectivity: they are no longer able to be held responsible for themselves as a unit. Similarly, the depression, anxiety or deliberate self-harm of one family member may constitute not only a breakdown of that person's subjectivity, but also a breach in the total subjectivity of the family, since the experience and behaviour of one constituent element may now be manifestly outside of their control. However, such a knock-on effect on family subjectivity is by no means immediate or inevitable. It is possible for

a family member to be acting in a seriously disturbed manner, but for the family to shield and cover this up, perhaps indefinitely, thus successfully maintaining the appearance of family unity and responsibility.

It is important, at the scale of the family, to differentiate between the breakdown of overall subjectivity and changes in system membership. It is perfectly possible for adults or children to enter or leave the system, for people to be born and die, without the coherence and unity of family subjectivity being seriously disrupted in any way. Similarly one adult may take the place of two, or vice versa, in obtaining the 'family wage' by participation in the wage labour or state benefit processes. Such changes, in themselves, do not constitute a disintegration of family subjectivity, (although they may indirectly contribute to placing strain upon it). Within the current social formation, divorce or bereavement does not, of itself, constitute a breakdown of family subjectivity, since economic and legal mechanisms exist to support and maintain the organisation and coherence of the family unit through such transitions. It would now be seen as quite acceptable for a different pair of adults to present themselves at the school parents' evening, as long as they maintained the necessary image of responsibility and consistency that would permit the family to continue to be seen as an autonomous functioning unit. (The picture would have been very different in the nineteenth century, when such events could have resulted in the dissolution of working class families with women and children being separated and admitted to the workhouse.)

Factors leading to breakdown

A review of the research evidence would suggest that there are strong correlations between the incidence of many manifestations of individual or family breakdown and structural oppression within the social formation. Broadly speaking, under Western patriarchal capitalism, black and working class families and individuals are more prone to break down at some point, and women are more prone to break down than men within the current organisation of family life. Women are 50% more likely than men to be admitted to a psychiatric hospital at some point in their lives (Littlewood and Lipsedge 1989 p.97). Similarly, Carpenter and Brockington (1980), in their study of first admissions to psychiatric hospitals in Manchester, found that people from Afro-Carribean or Asian ethnic groups were between 50% and 300% more likely to have been admitted at some point during the 15 year study period. (Studies that have included repeat admissions have produced more inconsistent results - perhaps due to the relative disinclination of certain communities to make use of the sort of follow up treatment that was offered to them.) Srole et al (1961) found that in a random sample of New Yorkers, lower class people were more than twice as likely as upper class people to be "psychiatrically impaired" (although it has not always been possible to distinguish the effect of class on mental health from the impact that mental breakdown may itself have on occupational status). Black and working class families are more likely to be subject to the 'discovery' of child abuse or neglect and the removal of children into care (see CRE 1977; Pelton 1981; Parton 1985).

Being subjected as part of a family has been shown to have a different effect on the propensity to breakdown for women and for men. Cochrane (1983) found that being married greatly reduced the likelihood of psychiatric admission for both genders, indicating perhaps that the subject positions available within the current configurations of family life offer considerably greater possibilities for transactions of recognition than do the subject positions available to single people within the existing social formation. However, the benefits for men were proportionately far greater than for women. Whereas the admission rates for single women and men were broadly similar, those for married women were nearly 70% higher than those for married men. This statistic would suggest that, while being subjected as part of a family reduces the vulnerability experienced by single people within a social formation that is organised around the institution of the family, the burden of sacrifice that goes with this falls unequally on the woman - it is she who has responsibility for maintaining family subjectivity and it is her personal breakdown that will more often signal the breakdown of that subjectivity.

Brown and Harris (1978) made a more detailed study of the factors that were most frequently associated with depression in working class mothers (a group that is particularly prone to this manifestation of breakdown). The factors that emerged as most important related to the burden of care placed upon them (having three or more children under 14 at home), their economic powerlessness and social isolation (having no full or part time job), their lack of access to transactions of recognition (having no "confiding relationship" with their husband or other close friend), and

the absence of such a relationship in the past (loss of their mother before the age of 11). This suggests a model of susceptibility to breakdown that depends on both current experience (both of oppression and of recognition) and on the way in which such past experiences have become internalised within the structure of the person or family unit.

Let us now attempt to place this empirical evidence within a theoretical framework and look at the factors that are likely either to enable a subjectivity to carry on functioning, or to precipitate some form of breakdown - whether for an individual or a family. The evidence would suggest that some degree of recognition - some meeting of wants and needs, some appreciation of ideas and actions - is essential if a subjectivity is to be able to continue to function in a coherent way. Such recognition may be obtained in transactions of mutuality (where no power relationships of domination or subordination are involved) or, in a more distorted fashion, by being able to demand recognition through being in a position of domination over others. Some degree of recognition may even be obtained by subtly renegotiating the terms of what is apparently a position of subordination - some servants are able to demand a certain degree of respect from their masters.

Such recognition may be fragmentary and contradictory - as the elements that comprise the subjectivity are themselves fragmented and contradictory. Although having to subject her/himself as an apparently consistent subject, an individual may derive personal support, not from being recognised as this illusory entity, but from partial recognitions of elements of her/his subjectivity that actually do not fit in very

well with this whole (or even with each other). In a paradoxical way, it may be the degree to which a woman receives recognition that her interests and experience *do not* always coincide with those of her family that actually enables her to carry on sacrificing parts of herself so as to keep the family going.

The meeting of needs through the internal transactions of a subjectivity can be equally important - for example, reassurance and nurturing may take place internally, whether as transactions between different ego-states or different family members. In turn, the capacity to undertake such transactions may be seen to result from the internalisation of personal or family history and, in particular, past experiences of oppression or recognition. Past recognition may be reproduced within the current organisation of an individual or family subjectivity as a sense of individual or group self-esteem, as a capacity for self-nurturing. Such acquired "resilience" may sustain them through periods of their lives during which they may be receiving precious little recognition within their current experience (see Rutter 1987). More specifically, such resilience may be seen to comprise internalised permissions, rights and validations within the make-up of the individual or family. For instance, a person who has internalised a Parent message that they have a right to exist is likely to have the internal resources to hold their subjectivity together in an oppressive situation that would force another person, who lacked such a permission, to break down.

Set against the support derived from past and present transactions of recognition are experiences of oppression and exploitation, and of

internal conflict and injury resulting from the ongoing supression of certain desires, ideas or activities. It is perhaps the cumulative effect of these that may precipitate some form of breakdown. Within the current social formation, all individuals and families experience the primary stress of having to live the illusion of free subjectivity as if it were real. In order to do this, they must suppress their anger with themselves for 'choosing' to be exploited and oppressed, and for alienating themselves from some of their desires and capacities in the process. This level of stress may be seen to depend crucially on their gender, race and class position. The greater the degree of current oppression, the greater the degree of internal contradiction and the greater the magnitude of internalised anger.

As was discussed earlier, Brown and Harris identified housebound working class mothers with young children as a group showing a particularly high incidence of "clinical depression". It is easy to see why this may be so, due to their oppressed and contradictory position both economically and ideologically. They experience particular difficulties in day-to-day material survival and in achieving the recognition necessary for emotional survival ("Baby must always come first"). On the one hand, as members of the working class, they are subjected in capitalist ideology to discourses that emphasise the moral worth and status of wage labouring (and, by the same token, take away from the status of those who are not in employment). On the other hand, they are subjected in the discourse of patriarchy which defines it as natural that women should be confined to, and subordinated in the home, bearing and rearing their men's children. Furthermore, maintaining social contact, say with

other (working class) women or with health and welfare professionals, requires that they construct the ideological pretence that they have made a positive choice to take up (and are enjoying) motherhood and domestic labour, even though the actual experience may be one of oppression and contradiction.

Whatever the structural power position of the person or family, some degree of sacrifice of desires or capacities is necessary in order to 'keep up the act' of the required subjectivity. However, the exact nature and degree of this sacrifice may depend on their gender, race and class position. A white, ruling class man will typically have to make certain distortions to his subjectivity in order to maintain his position of dominance with regard to other groups (for example, hiding any emotional expression of vulnerability). Such a position of dominance is also likely to isolate him from the possibility of participating in any transactions of recognition that are based on mutual relationships with others. This may, in certain circumstances, lead to an unbearable degree of stress (perhaps when faced with a situation such as a bereavement), such that the man is no longer able to maintain the organisation of his subjectivity, or occupy the position that he had established for himself. However, in the normal run of events, the organisation of his subjectivity would be such that he would expect to sacrifice relatively little of his wants and needs.

The situation with regard to a bourgeois family is more complex. On the one hand, all family members are placed in a position of privilege, and can similarly demand that their needs be met at the expense of others

outside the family. However, despite this, women and children subjected within such a family may be subjected to such a degree of oppression at the hands of the male household head that the family may reach a point where certain members no longer allow themselves to be bribed materially into toeing the line and may breach the family subjectivity - perhaps only for a short time until father's wealth and influence are sufficient either to banish or reintegrate the erring family member.

By contrast, a working class family tends to be in a position of constant strain and contradiction at the economic level, since the man is often unable to live up to the dictates of patriarchal ideology, and earn a 'family wage' that is sufficient to support his family as a single unit in relation to the wage labour process. Instead, he is invited to feel guilty about not earning sufficient, while the woman may be placed in the position of feeling equally guilty about 'deserting' the home in order to earn the secondary wage that is necessary for family survival.

There are even greater ideological contradictions for a woman as a single parent. Within the current patriarchal social formation, she is under pressure to construct her family as if it should be a two parent family, and, in her transactions both inside and outside the family, she must constantly apologise for or cover up the supposed 'lack' of a man to run the household. Similarly, the subject positions available to a black family are intrinsically oppressive and exploitative within the current social formation. 'Keeping up the act' for them would involve the sacrifice of many opportunities, desires and abilities, just in

order to be accepted and be able to participate in the social order. Within racist discourses, they are placed in the position of almost having to apologise for their very existence, with any assertion of their cultural heritage being defined as 'causing trouble' or 'not fitting in' - or as a quaint spectacle for the amusement of white people.

Perhaps most crucially, it is the availability of some transactions of (mutual) recognition that can enable individuals and families to resist their current experience of oppression and to empower themselves. Formal structures, such as women's groups, trade unions, or black cultural associations, may provide real alternatives to breaking down under the stress of oppression and exploitation. Similarly, informal structures, such as the connections between families through living in the same neighbourhood, or being part of the same extended family network (links that are generally created and maintained by women), can ensure material, ideological and emotional survival in circumstances that might otherwise lead to an internalisation of hopelessness and eventual breakdown. From this perspective it may be seen that bereavement may not only cause distress, but may also contribute to breakdown in that it can disrupt and terminate the organisation of such mutual support structures.

Some subjectivities are obviously more vulnerable than others to break down under a given stress. People and families develop their own idiosyncratic thresholds of tolerance to particular stresses. Physical factors, such as heredity or physical vitality, may undoubtedly form a

component of this. However, as we have seen, resilience or vulnerability may often result from their legacy of specific life experiences. Thus, whether or not a subjectivity breaks down may depend on how they have internalised their own history - the accumulation of their particular responses to experiences that were empowering or were oppressive and contradictory.

Childhood experiences of abuse may have a devastating impact on a person's self-organisation, especially if these were accompanied by a lack of recognition or support in other key (family) relationships at the time. A child who is sexually abused by her/his father is forcibly constructed as the object of the father's (sexual) desire - with little room to to negotiate any possibility of personal recognition. Allowing her/himself, say, to be bribed with sweets or privileges, far from constituting an experience of recognition, actually gives the father the power to determine what the child's desires should be - what is to be a 'fair' reward for her/his prostitution. It gives no acknowledgement to the real feelings of hurt and betrayal that may be engendered in the child - and which s/he may have no choice but to suppress (as was demonstrated in the work of Alice Miller). Such past experiences can give rise to an organisation of personal subjectivity that is self-alienating: the person redefines her/his transactions with the outside world on the basis that s/he has no right to recognition, even when this is offered.

Similarly, at the scale of the family, there can be a history of oppression that has been internalised as a rigid transactional horizon

that inhibits the possibilities for transactions of recognition, both in the internal and external relations of the family. Some such exclusion of transactional possibilities occurs, almost inevitably, in the way that a new family unit is formed, with the submerging of (particularly women's) desires and aspirations into patriarchally defined subject positions. This can only be achieved by processes of enforced or apparently 'voluntary' repression (for example, by the woman 'choosing' to give up her life outside the home and become a 'wife'). Such processes then come to define the ongoing organisation of family subjectivity in ways that specifically oppress and abuse women and children within the family. Over and above this, a history of subjection of the family unit within external structures of racist or class oppression can lead to collective withdrawal from many transactional possibilities - an internal suppression of desires and capacities that mirrors the patterns of external oppression. The family unit does not always function as a haven of support and mutual recognition. For instance, Hess (1970) identified how a long-term experience of economic powerlessness and subjection to rigid external authority structures (in workplaces, benefit offices etc.) resulted in poor families adopting a "passive cognitive organisation" that excluded initiative or the will to achieve among all family members.

As we have seen, both individual and family subjectivities are inherently unstable, so that unresolved conflict arising at one scale may excite conflict at the other. In many cases a breakdown of subjectivity is likely to result from the cumulative effect of stresses originating at different scales. External experiences of oppression may

lead to the exacerbation of splits and inequalities within a family, and this may, in turn, become reflected in an escalation of internal conflicts and the oppression of already more vulnerable family members. In the instance of a male breadwinner being made redundant, his family may direct their anger, not externally at the employer, but internally, in patterns of mutual blame and guilt, thereby escalating already existing patterns of tension and repression (see McKee and Bell 1986). By a similar process, a man subjected to racist abuse outside the family may seek to achieve some personal recognition at the expense of other family members by acting in a dominant or abusive manner towards them, and this may become part of the ongoing family organisation. In other instances, an unresolved legacy of personal oppression may become reflected in projections at the scale of the family. For example, a woman who had experienced sexual abuse as a child may have internalised this oppression by splitting off and repressing (part of) her own desire as 'dirty'. In her transactions with her children, she may set up one child to represent a projection of the 'good' or 'pretty' child that she had wanted to be (but had been defiled), while another child may be invited to act out the 'naughty' or 'dirty' child that represents both the child position that she was herself forced into (as the object of another's abuse), and the anger and rebellion that she was prevented from expressing at the time (or since).

Stages in the process of breakdown

As we have seen, living as a subjectivity within an oppressive social formation is *always* a struggle involving conflict and compromise. It involves establishing a transactional horizon that suppresses those elements that would jeopardise participation within a particular social and economic context, while allowing some (albeit distorted) expression of desires, capacities and ideas, and a meeting of sufficient material, emotional and disursive needs to ensure survival. Such a horizon would operate in relation to internal as well as external transactions: at the scale of the individual, only certain elements of past and present experience would be permitted into awareness, and only a certain portion of these would be allowed external expression; similarly, at the scale of the family, only certain thoughts, feelings or behaviour would be permitted within family interaction, with a slightly different repertoire being allowed in relation to transactions outside the family.

The structural power position of a subjectivity will determine how needs may be met. A position of domination over others allows the gratification of certain needs at others' expense - but, at the same time, alienates the person (or family) from close contact with others. There may even be some leeway within transactions of subordination for certain survival needs to be met (for example, being situated within the discourse of 'benevolent paternalism') - but always at the expense of ultimately being patronised or put down. However, it is outside the context of unequal power that needs can often be met most effectively - through participating in transactions of mutual recognition.

Up to a certain point, however inadequately needs for recognition and support are being met, and however high the price that is being paid in terms of domination and abuse, family members may decide to put up with things as they are, either because of actual intimidation or because there is little realistic prospect of their needs being met any better outside the family. (The social formation is structured such that certain material and emotional needs may typically only be met within the organisation of the family). The fear of losing what little support they still have leads people to stay put and contain their experience of oppression within themselves. Such an uneasy stalemate (which may last for some time) is likely to be reflected in the transactional organisation of the family as a whole, in terms of an atmosphere of tension and pent-up feeling. Such periods of fragile stability may easily be upset by changes (or potential changes) in family composition that upset delicate power balances, such as the arrival of a new baby and stages in the progress of children towards independent adulthood. Thus family subjectivity comes to incorporate (and partly suppress) a history of struggle and conflict, during which family members may have become increasingly alienated from their own capacities and desires.

The process of breakdown may be seen to comprise several distinct stages. The first of these is when, instead of a person or family continuing to resist their oppression (albeit in very small ways), all such room for manouevre may have become blocked - perhaps due to their dependence on their oppressors or their lack of sufficient support or recognition from other sources. This would place them in a position where they are no longer able to carry on *negotiating* their subjectivity

and simply live out what is required of them. In an effort to maintain the illusion of a coherent subjectivity at all costs, and hence retain some participation in the social formation, their transactional horizon would have shifted to become just a facade of social predictability which denies them any expression of their own ideas, capacities or desires.

Let us return to the perspective of the dynamic organisation of subjectivities in terms of driver-adaptations. According to TA theory, these derive from Child responses to parental messages: how one must adapt in order to be acceptable within the discourse of powerful others. Thus, when placed in stressful situations where recognition may be in jeopardy, people tend to fall back on such decisions, believing that their minute-by-minute survival may depend on their ability to organise themselves so as to Be Perfect, Try Hard, and so on - and hence be acceptable within externally imposed discourses. Similarly, when a family subjectivity is under stress, it may try to safeguard its survival by increasingly organising itself (and its constituent members) according to one or more of these adaptations. Up to a certain degree, such driver-adaptations allow some inclusion of the creativity and initiative of individuals or families, so still enabling them to negotiate their subjectivity to a meaningful extent. However, as the level of stress is increased - and issues of survival seem to be more at stake - their subjectivity may become just a hollow mask, with all transactions being undertaken from role positions that are externally constructed, corresponding to variants of the basic positions of Victim, Rescuer, Aggressor or Persecutor.

Strictly speaking, this stage would not be seen as constituting an actual breakdown, since, from the point of view of an observer situated within the prevailing transactional framework of the social formation, nothing would appear to be disturbing or threatening to the social order. In practice, for any individual or family, such a state of alienation or reification is likely to become unlivable at some point. Unable to play any active part in demanding that their wants or needs are attended to, their survival would depend on whatever vicarious recognition results from the performance of their role(s). For example, a woman who has ceased to be able to negotiate the roles of 'housewife' and 'mother', is situated in a position where her emotional and material survival is precarious, since her needs are automatically marginalised and subordinated to those of all other family members. Living such an alienated subjectivity is likely, at some point, to precipitate a person or a whole family into a more overt manifestation of breakdown.

The second stage of breakdown may be seen as some version of a 'protest' at what is going on. It is characterised by an alteration of the transactional horizon in response to an actual (or threatened) emergence of some hitherto repressed element, albeit in some distorted form. This alteration may be such as to disrupt the coherence of the subjectivity, giving it the appearance of being in some sense 'out of control'. Thus, instead of anger and pain providing the basis for a constructive renegotiation of subjectivity, it may become deflected into futile and self-destructive ways of thinking, feeling and acting - but ones which nevertheless are sufficiently powerful as to undermine the overall organisation of their subjectivity and to have a disturbing effect on

others situated within conventional transactional patterns. Examples of such 'protests' would include anorexia, depression, or delinquency.

As well as signalling a protest at having to live the unlivable (and feeling powerless to renegotiate the terms of their situation), such forms of breakdown may also be seen to represent desperate strategies for exerting some control over the situation, even if only in the paradoxical sense of the person or family being in control of their own self-destructiveness (although often not at a conscious level). The 'hunger strike' of the young person with anorexia may be seen as both a public demonstration that life has become impossible, and a paradoxical strategy for taking control over the process of eating.

Such strategies may represent further escalations of driver-adaptations - but to the point where, rather than guaranteeing recognition within the terms of externally imposed discourses, they are taken to such extremes that they actually disrupt the coherence (and undermine the acceptability) of the subjectivity within the structures in which it must participate. In this way, the 'protest' may simply be an exaggeration of what seems already to be required of the person or family, and a further supression of their feelings about (and ability to resist) what is actually going on. In response to continued oppression, or the absence of recognition, a woman who constructs herself so as to Keep Quiet (in the sense of subjugating her own feelings in order to be of service to others) may exaggerate this to the point where she shuts off her feelings altogether and manifests what is defined from the outside as 'depression'. Thus, to a greater or lesser degree, what

appears as the 'protest' may also act as a desperate defence against any awareness of the real issues that are afffecting their life - issues that may seem too painful to contemplate and too dangerous to be allowed any direct expression. In this way, the 'protest' may be seen to be a defence that is taken to such lengths that it actually signals the existence (but not the precise nature) of underlying issues of abuse, oppression and alienation.

The degree to which such issues may be suppressed reflects the extent of any internal imbalance of power within a subjectivity. A powerful element of the subjectivity may be in a position to defend itself against this potential awareness by imposing a horizon that is so excessively rigid that it begins to appear strange to those outside its system of control. This response, conventionally termed 'paranoia', may be characterised by an extreme degree of suspiciousness and imposed isolation from outside contact. At the scale of the individual, elements of Adapted Child and Parent ego states combine to overpower other elements of Child and Adult, resulting in the paradoxical situation of the Take Control driver-adaptation itself going out of control and totally dominating the organisation of personal subjectivity. A similar process of breakdown may be identified at the scale of the family:

> "There exists a 'paranoid family style' usually characterised by a 'strong' parent ... who imposes a series of rigid family rules that may include irrational beliefs ... and a philosophy of life imbued with distrust, apprehensiveness and hostility. Other members of the

family ... are generally weak, submissive persons who comply without resistance to the paranoid way of thinking" (Kaffman 1983 p.114). From the point of view of an external observer, a paranoid family style might engender some degree of distrust and unease. However, this would only constitute a breakdown at the point where the defence measures themselves became problematic (for example, keeping a child off school, or threatening violence towards visitors).

As the research of Goodwin (1985) has shown, it is behind this particular exaggerated adaptation of family subjectivity that the (sexual) abuse of vulnerable family members is most likely to occur. In such a family, a man may get away for some time with being able to displace his own anger and pain (and his fear of owning these directly) onto the abuse of more vulnerable family members (a process that is, to some degree, already inherent in patriarchal family organisation). A paranoid family style minimises the possibility that the victim may, at some point, 'go public' about the abuse and trigger external intervention. In such an instance, family subjectivity may be seen to have broken down, not from the point when the abuse commenced, but only from the point when the victim was able to take some form of action which 'blew the whistle' and made the issue a public one. Very often, if the victim is her/himself particularly powerless and unsupported, this action will constitute some form of personal breakdown (such as self-injury) - a 'protest' that does not articulate her/his distress directly, but does threaten the organisation of family subjectivity.

At this stage, breakdown of subjectivity is usually only partial. It is often only one element that breaks through the constraints of the organisation of subjectivity - in other areas, the controls remain intact. Many aspects are likely to remain sufficiently coherent and recognisable to allow the person or family still to be subjected, and subject themselves in relation to many other discourses, activities or emotional transactions. Often there is only breakdown in relation to one or two particular levels of transaction, while there is no significant disturbance at other levels. For example, at the scale of the individual, a form of breakdown such as anorexia may be seen to be very specific. In all other respects, a person with anorexia may continue to organise her/himself in an entirely conventional way, participating quite predictably in many other areas of material, emotional and discursive transactions (although probably in quite a reified or alienated fashion). However, as long as s/he refuses to take responsibility for eating enough to stay alive, s/he fails to construct her/himself as the required autonomous subjectivity.

Similarly, at the scale of a family, breakdown often reflects just one specific element that has gone 'out of control', while in all other respects, the family continues to be organised as a consistent and responsible unit. In the above instance, if a child refuses to take responsibility for eating enough, and the rest of the family finds itself unable to take over this responsibility (by threats, bribes or whatever), then it is not just the child's subjectivity that has broken down, but also that of the family. Even though the family may be transacting entirely conventionally and predictably in all its other

dealings with the outside world, the fact that it is manifestly unable to be responsible for its child's eating means that it is no longer able to organise its subjectivity so as to fit into the required slot.

The third possible stage of breakdown is that of the collapse of any pretence of order, coherence or comprehensiblity, such that the person or family ceases to exist as a subjectivity in any meaningful sense. The transactional horizon between what can and cannot be expressed would no longer operate in any consistent way. Such a breakdown would be characterised by previously repressed elements of individual or family subjectivity breaking out independently of each other, expressing in a disjointed way the real underlying tensions and contradictions between each of them. This is likely to seem strange and disturbing to external observers, and may also be confusing and terrifying to any residual subjectivity of the person or family, against which these new elements may seem alien and dangerous. In the case of an individual, this would be seen as madness or going berserk. In the case of a family, this would be seen as having become chaotic, perhaps with all the children being defined as 'beyond parental control'.

The key feature of this stage of breakdown is the abandoning of any attempt to constrain conflicting elements so as to be able to occupy a unitary subject position. In their discourse and activity, the person or family ceases to own any recognisable position of 'I' or 'We'. The subjectivity ceases to be comprehensible either to itself, or to others who are situated within conventional ideology. Its discourse appears fragmented, psychotic or bizarre. Its actions appear unpredictable and

dangerous. It no longer situates itself as a single responsible subject. Although this breach of censorship may allow some outlet for previously repressed desires, ideas or activities, the expression of these in such circumstances will tend to be so fragmentary and contradictory, and so unrelated to any real here-and-now possibilities for recognition, that no significant or satisfying connection is likely to be established with others.

Such discourse and behaviour will appear subversive, in that its content threatens to undermine the fragile veneer of control by which other subjectivities maintain their apparent cohesiveness. Often in coded and ambiguous ways, it expresses that which must be suppressed in order to maintain the prevailing social order. In 'madness', Western people may allude, almost in forms of parody, to their real powerlessness and lack of control over their lives, perhaps by attributing control to "voices" in the head, or to some external conspiracy. Similar processes of individual breakdown may be found in other social formations. Within the patriarchal structures of traditional Punjabi society, women are forbidden to articulate any anger or aggression against their oppression by men (see Brown et al, 1981). If pushed too far, the culturally specific form of breakdown that is available to them is that of spirit possession. In this they are able to abandon their conventional subjectivity as the spirit 'comes over' them. They are no longer a subject in their own right - simply a mouthpiece for the speech and actions of the 'spirit'. In this way, their anger and aggression is able to emerge in a way that does not situate them as responsible for these feelings.

At the scale of the family, Bell (1962) identified how families can cease to transact effectively using symbolic languages, both in internal and external transactions, and revert instead to a rigid and inflexible pattern of pre-verbal signs gestures and actions, whose meaning is not clearly fixed or owned by the people concerned. Such a breakdown of symbolic communication produces a discourse which no longer locates the family as a coherent subject. This places the onus to construct meaning out of such utterances and behaviours entirely on the observer, and allows the fractured elements of the subjectivity the option of disowning responsibility for (and even awareness of) any meaning, should it prove too painful. In this way, a family may express its loss of control by giving out a series of such messages (perhaps via different channels) that can project a sense of panic and chaos on to those who attempt to construct meaning from them. An extreme expression of such loss of control could be that of apparently savage and purposeless violence directed at other family members or family property - and any outsiders that try to intervene - as in the drama of the domestic siege.

The final stage of the process of breakdown (whether partial or total) is that of the societal response - how it is 'managed'. If it is not to threaten the prevailing social order, both 'protests' and delirious transactions must, first of all, be deprived of their seditious meaning. Secondly, measures must be taken to reconstruct the errant subjectivity - whether it be an individual or a family. In such instances, agencies of social control are swift in intervening, often by removing people to places where their subjectivites can be reconstructed, or constrained within a symbiotic relationship with state or voluntary apparatuses.

Conventionally, within capitalist ideology, such 'delirious' discourse and behaviour is dismissed as meaningless criminality or symptomatology, within state influenced discourses such as law, psychiatry and social work. As Foucault (1967) demonstrated from contemporary accounts, prior to capitalist domination in ideology, delirious discourse had been tolerated (but with little sympathy or understanding), since irrationality did not constitute a threat to aristocratic control. Feudal organisation did not depend on an ideology of people making apparently free and rational choices, and hence seeming to be responsible for their own exploitation. However, using a similar historical perspective, Showalter (1987) showed how, under both feudal and capitalist social formations, men in the legal and medical professions continued to suppress any content of 'madness' that constituted an expression of women's real experience - any suggestion that women could act, speak or feel on their own behalf rather than in the service of others, any possibility that they could exist outside the subject positions that were conventionally available to them.

Similarly, just as the content of female 'madness' has conventionally been redefined and suppressed within Western patriarchal culture, so the content expressed by Punjabi women who become 'possessed' is redefined and suppresed by the male exorcist or "chella", so that it is not allowed to threaten the social order. It is through his ritualised interventions that the women's subjectivities are restructured within conventionally allowed subject positions:

> "Possession (like 'insanity' in our own society) is seen as something that 'comes over' people; it is beyond their control,

> external to them, and requires different forms of treatment than does wilful misbehaviour. Anger and aggression expressed through spirit possession are accepted as part of an illness, in which the person is 'not herself'. Given this diagnosis ... it is finally men ... who cure the 'ill' woman, and return her to her appropriate place in the social system" (Brown et al 1981 p.134).

With the transition to Western capitalism, considerable (and expensive) steps were taken by the capitalist ruling class to repress the delirious activity of 'mad' individuals and 'chaotic' families. Families that could not organise themselves as capable and responsible subjects were forcibly split up and placed separately within institutions such as the workhouse. Individuals who failed to construct themselves as responsible and coherent subjectivities were banished to institions such as prisons or lunatic asylums, or were transported overseas. Under late capitalism there has been a further shift in approach. Instead of going to the expense of such exclusion, greater efforts are made to 'treat' the deviance and reconstruct the person or family as a subjectivity that can once again take its place within 'normal' society. Changes in child-care and psychiatric practice, and the rise of family therapy itself, may be viewed in this context. Failing such a complete 'rehabilitation' of subjectivity, people and families may be placed in continuing symbiotic relationships with State or non-professional 'carers' that prevent them from constituting any real threat to the prevailing social order - the ideological basis of much of 'community care'.

PART II: THE PRACTICE OF FAMILY THERAPY

9: CONSIDERATIONS OF METHODOLOGY

In Part 1, I brought together elements of a critical theoretical framework with which to analyse power relations within families - not just in the overall sense of identifying who has power over whom, and who has power together with others, but in the sense of identifying the toing and froing of power struggles, the minute-by-minute renegotiation of power relationships and familial organisation that may underpin both 'breakdown' and apparently 'normal' functioning. In this Chapter, I will seek to develop a research methodology by which to put the elements of this framework to the test, to determine how useful they are in examining whatever changes may take place (empowering or otherwise) within actual examples of family therapy practice.

In constructing this, I will consider the research implications of the different theoretical traditions discussed in Chapter 2 - humanism, positivism and critical theory - in order to derive a methodology that relates theory to practice (and vice versa) in a consistent way. I will then discuss the particular issues raised by such a study of family therapy practice, in terms of choice of source material (and negotiating access), possible interference of the researcher in what is being observed and, most importantly, the procedures whereby the very process of 'observation' itself may be detached from conventional 'common sense' or 'systemic' ways of viewing family interactions, in order to pick up what may typically be obscured by such perspectives .

Approaches to research practice

In the field of social science, much of the work on research methodology has come out of the traditions of positivism and humanism. The former has produced quantitative and statistical research methods, while out of the latter have come the methodologies of qualitative and ethnographic research. As the primary purpose of this research is not to quantify therapeutic outcomes, but to test out the value of certain theoretical concepts in interpreting families' experience and interaction, it may be seen that positivist methodologies are not directly appropriate. Critical theory has yet to construct its own traditions of research methodology - tending instead to draw upon humanist and ethnographic research, either at the stage of constructing 'descriptive theory', or at the stage of interpreting actual experiences and interactions in the light of theoretical concepts (as is the aim of this research).

The research traditions of humanism and ethnography are relevant in their ability to get close to and interrogate human subjects. For example, researchers as diverse as Freud (1896), Laing (1965), and Young and Wilmott (1986) have left us a valuable archive of what people have actually said about their experience. However, from a critical perspective, such archives may not be taken at face value. Any interpretation must, for instance, be based on some theoretical understanding of what subject positions were available to the people concerned from which they could speak of their experience - and hence of the ways in which their accounts were constructed for them by their insertion in contemporary structures of social relations.

Within the field of research on family therapy, there has been a move away from an exclusive reliance on positivist outcome studies, accompanied by an increasing interest in the practical value of qualitative research methodologies:

> "Whilst formal quantitative research influences the field, albeit slowly, many swifter changes seem to be brought about through the influence of qualitative research" (Speed and Carpenter 1991 p.2).

The focus has shifted towards an examination in more depth of the *processes* of therapeutic change, with a resurgence of interest in using the theoretical interpretation of single case studies (see Wynne 1988). This suggests a reordering of the overall research process. Instead of starting at the 'macro' scale and asking "Does 'the therapy' achieve consistent results?" (before attempting to deconstruct the complexities of what 'the therapy' might actually be), these approaches start at the 'micro' scale and seek to tease out what parts of a therapeutic process may have contributed to bringing about (or preventing) change in a specific situation. In any instance where the *possibility* of change can be established, subsequent research may then focus on how (and whether) such changes may be sustained in a consistent way. In this way, the interpretive may usefully precede (and inform) the quantificatory. For the purposes of this research, a starting point at the 'micro' scale of qualitative approaches would seem to be more fruitful, since a focus on the processes of therapeutic change, rather than an overview of final outcomes, would provide a better testing ground for concepts that seek to provide a dynamic understanding of shifting power relations.

Humanist approaches comprise a broad spectrum of methods, from those closely allied to positivist hypothesis-testing, to the opposite extreme of largely untheorised 'naturalistic' description. Within the field of family therapy, an example of the latter approach has been a study of consumer perceptions and evaluations of the family therapy they received (Howe 1989). Rather than looking directly at the process of therapy, Howe undertook interviews after therapy was completed, and he presents an edited selection of consumers' subjective views and understandings. These must be taken at face value, since he chooses not to employ any theoretical framework, either to analyse changes within family organisation, or to examine the various discursive structures in which the consumers may themselves have been situated - which may have made it easier for them to 'see' events from particular perspectives, or to understand them in certain ways rather than others. Thus, his choice of a methodology of 'naturalistic' description means that, although this research constitutes a damning indictment of prevailing systemic approaches - in terms of consumers' perceptions rather than positivist outcome measures - it cannot go further and inform or reflect upon any theoretical understanding of what impact therapy may (or may not) have had upon familial organisation in these instances. In his methodology, Howe finds himself without any theoretical perspective (critical or otherwise) that enables him to move beyond the dualism that separates the uncritical positivism of the systemic family therapists from the pure subjectivism of his humanist methodology:

> "My research method ... assumes that the subjective experience of the individual is fundamentally important in gaining an understanding of personal and social meaning... I realise fully

> that there may be no common ground between the researcher who values personal experiences and the practitioner who seeks behavioural changes. In effect, if the subjectivist and the objectivist remain unmoved, the business of one has no relevance to the concerns of the other. There are those who attempt to discover 'meta-positions' which transcend these factional squabbles but, though very attractive ... they involve advanced theorising" (1989 pp.vii,92).

It is precisely the purpose of this research to provide such a 'meta' theoretical perspective - one that can penetrate beneath both empirical descriptions and subjective impressions, and hence examine critically both what is missing from positivist accounts of behavioural change, and the manner in which consumers' accounts of their own experience may, to a degree, be constructed for them given their location within an oppressive social formation (including the current construction of their particular familial organisation).

As Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) argue, both positivist hypothesis-testing and 'naturalistic' description can degenerate into an obsession with superficial appearances. Between these two extremes, there is a 'middle ground' of ethnographic research in which theory is seen as important as a basis for understanding, and there is a tradition of "reflexivity" between field observation and theory. To a greater or lesser extent, each is allowed to inform the other in an ongoing way during the research. A similar connection between theory and practice is also to be found in critical approaches, the main difference being that, in critical theory, the ultimate goal is to bring about change in social practices (where these are oppressive), whereas ethnography seeks

only to make sense of what is observed. Within ethnography, there is considerable divergence in how to employ such reflexivity. Most commonly, this involves starting with detailed observations and attempting to construct theory out of this, as with the approach of 'grounded theory' (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Such a methodology is inductive - classifying and comparing instances until generalisations can be specified exactly. This is actually far closer to the empirical methodology of the less theoretical aspects of natural science (for example, botany), than it is to the more empathic traditions of humanism. Less common (but particularly relevant to this study) is the sequence of starting with an already constructed theory, applying it to a particular social context and then reflecting back on the theory:

> "Family therapy research should be theory-based and theory-driven... Further, the relationship between research design and theory should be reciprocal: research findings should serve as feedback to clarify and strenghten the theories" (Wynne 1988 p.250).

The use of ethnographic study to test out the explanatory value of theoretical concepts was pioneered by Bensman and Vidich (1960). They subjected data from a community study to analysis using a variety of established sociological theories to determine how far each theory "would permit us to comprehend our data" and "explain the facts which remain unexplained". Similar approaches that start with theory have been employed in studies of school cultures in Britain (see Lacey 1970; Hargreaves et al 1975; Ball 1981). Rather than compare the value of different theoretical perspectives, their intention was, "starting from the formal concepts of 'labelling theory' ... to extend the use of this

analytic framework to, and examine its value for, the study of school deviance" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983 p.35). This implies a reflexive interaction between theory and practice. On the one hand, it is the theoretical framework that is used to give meaning to what is being observed. On the other, the value of the theory is itself being tested in terms of its explanatory power in making sense of what is taking place. Such an approach - of applying theory to a specific field and, at the same time, evaluating the explanatory power of the theory - may be seen to correspond with the purposes of the present study.

Ethnographic approaches to examining experience and social participation are derived from the humanist tradition, in which subjectivity is seen as a unitary and unproblematic 'I', rather than an entity of conflict and struggle that is socially constructed and continually reconstructed. However, from a critical perspective, it can no longer be acceptable simply to take at face value the descriptions and meanings given to what is going on by the actors concerned (as in Howe's study of consumer perceptions). We are not just interested in how they organise and construct their world; we are, at the same time, interested in how they are organised and constructed by their world. It is only a critical approach that may allow us to identify connections between power relations and forms of personal and social organisation, and hence to determine whether a process of therapy is empowering, either collectively (for the family as a whole) or individually (for particular family members). As we have seen earlier, it is the concept of subjectivity that may open up this area to critical enquiry, and form a theoretical bridge between humanist and materialist approaches.

Choice of methodology

The concept of subjectivity suggests an understanding of current forms of personal and social organisation as moments in an ongoing struggle, rather than reflecting relatively fixed (or quasi-'natural') positions (as does systems theory). It is this combined focus on power relations and the dynamics of change which is at the heart of a critical approach. Therefore, in testing out the value of such concepts in practice, a far richer body of data would be available if it were derived from direct observation of processes of familial change - with the possibility of seeing even momentary shifts of position and power relations - than if it were simply based on a comparison between static 'snapshots' of forms of organisation before and after a particular process of intervention has taken place. Such a focus on the dynamics of change is paralleled in the research of Ball (1981), who found it was more revealing to test out his theoretical propositions in relation to school culture by observing a school *during* a process of organisational transition. In the context of the present research, this would suggest a focus on the minute-by-minute processes of renegotiation or rearrangement that may take place within a small number of individual case studies, rather than a more general overview of outcome data.

Although such detailed analyses of case examples may generate some preliminary conclusions about the impact of certain family therapy practices - for example, whether particular forms of intervention are more or less empowering to (certain) family members - these outcomes must be seen as incidental, rather than central to this reseearch

project: my primary aim in analysing case study material must be seen to be the testing of theory rather than any systematic evaluation or development of current practice. To do justice to the latter, a much wider study would be required, encompassing all the very different 'schools' of family therapy practice and a critical evaluation of the various settings in which these may be practiced - how the political relations of the agency, as well as choice of techniques and theoretical models, may determine what changes (if any) are made possible or encouraged within the power relations of a family. It is also beyond the scope of this study to make any categoric conclusions as to the overall value of family therapy as a mode of intervention. Again, such research would require a much wider selection of case material, and comprehensive studies of follow-up, to establish to what extent any changes in power organisation that took place during the therapy could be sustained once the family was resubjected within the discourses and material relations of everyday life.

In order to evaluate the political implications of changing familial organisation, two aspects need to be considered: firstly, the degree to which family and personal subjectivities appear more or less empowered in their external transactions; and secondly, the relative openness or oppressiveness of their internal organisation - the degree to which constituent elements are either able to transact on the basis of mutual recognition, or are subjected to distortion, exclusion or confusion as a consequence of their membership of the collective subjectivity. In studying case examples, I will be looking at whether the theoretical concepts expose not only how the subjectivities of the family and

individual family members may have come to be reconstituted within therapy sessions, but also any indications as to how each family may have come to break down in the first place.

The choices available in order to obtain case material were to interview families directly, either before, during, or after their involvement in family therapy, or to use videotapes of family therapy sessions in which all the 'interviewing' would be conducted by the therapist. There are inherent difficulties with either approach. As we have already seen, a critical perspective highlights how problematic the process of research interviewing actually is. If one moves beyond a humanist perspective which assumes that interviewees, individually or in a group, are free subjects fully able to express what they think or feel, one is faced by the problem that whatever is spoken is likely to be influenced by the speaker's position within particular discursive and organisational structures - structures that are determined by the very ensemble of power relations about which the researcher is seeking evidence. In particular, current power relations within the family, and the setting of the research interview itself, are likely to have a very significant impact on what can and cannot be said. As was discussed earlier, it was such issues which limit the value of a consumer studies (such as that of Howe) in providing evidence as to whether or not any changes have taken place in the political organisation of the families studied.

Furthermore, any form of direct interviewing inevitably places the interviewer in a relationship with the family - one that may inadvertently influence what is being observed (see Lofland 1971; Lacey

1976). In the case of the present research, there is obvious overlap between the roles of interviewer and therapist in that both may ask similar questions. Thus it would be impossible to interview a family before or during the course of therapy without this producing its own 'therapeutic' outcomes in terms of increased awareness and shifts in position. It is equally problematic to ask a family afterwards to recall accurate detail of the various stages of a process of change:

> "Changes in the social environment and in the self inevitlbly produce transformations of perspective and it is characteristic of such transformations that the person finds it difficult or impossible to remember his former actions, outlook, or feelings" (Becker and Geer 1970 p.141).

If we accept a critical understanding of subjectivity in which any image of unity and consistency is maintained only through processes of repression, then it is likely that elements of earlier forms of organisation may quite literally be excluded from current awareness or be denied the possibility of expression.

By contrast, a videotape recording may offer an opportunity for observing minute-by-minute changes in the organisation of family and personal subjectivities (and the relationship between these and the interventions of the therapist) that is free of any influence or 'contamination' from the activity of the researcher. Videotapes have been recorded as part of standard practice within certain family therapy agencies. Instead of potential similarities between the interventions of therapist and researcher constituting a problem, the various therapists would, in effect, have been doing the interviewing for me.

They would, as part of the therapy, be asking questions that would elicit information, in terms of both content and process, about the organisation of the family, perhaps including their history of the process of breakdown that brought them to therapy in the first place. Over and above this, the videotape offers an opportunity to observe how the family organise themselves in relation to the therapist, both in terms of what family members say (and what they do not say) and in the process of how it is said (and by whom). Even a spontaneous discussion of the weather, a family argument, or just an invitation to sit down in the chairs provided, could be revealing in terms of the changing state of family power relations. I therefore decided that videotapes, rather than direct interviewing, would provide the best available evidence on minute-by-minute changes in the organisation of power relations - and hence the greatest possibility for testing out the value (or otherwise) of the framework of critical theory.

However, it is important also to recognise the various limitations of this research methodology. Firstly, there may be much of a non-verbal nature that goes on in the sessions that is not picked up by the camera or adequately represented in a transcription of the videotape. I have only been able to include the more overt gestures and movements as 'stage directions' in the transcripts. Secondly, as none of the therapeutic approaches employ any structured history taking with the family, we may only be provided with a somewhat sketchy record of the processes of breakdown - but what we do have comes directly from the family and is not mediated by any imposed theoretical or therapeutic structures. Finally, what this choice of source material rules out is

any assessment of any changes that take place (or do not take place) in the way that the family is organised away from the somewhat artificial environment of the family therapy sessions themselves.

If we refer to the concept of subjectivity, it is easy to see that a family may be organised differently when they are subjected within the discursive structure of family therapy, as compared to the various other economic, discursive and emotional structures within which they will be subjected as part of their everyday life. As one of Howe's sample of consumers puts it, "All them meetings, well, they weren't normal, if you see what I mean" (1989 p.49). Nevertheless, on theoretical grounds, the subjectivity that they display in the therapy situation may be seen to be just as 'real' as the subjectivity they display in any other situation, and any flexibility or organisational change that emerges in interaction with the therapist may potentially be transferable to other situations - depending on how this may be negotiated in specific instances. Given the evidence of positivist outcome research (see, for example, Markus et al 1990), some shifts in family organisation that take place in therapy would seem to be carried over into other situations, but this is by no means inevitable. This highlights the need for further research to establish how 'robust' changes in familial power relations can be when translated into the exigencies of day-to-day living in subsequent months and years.

Selecting source material

There is limited availability of videotaped examples of family therapy practice where consent had already been given by families for its use for training and educational purposes (obtaining such consent is only common practice in a few agencies - and many families may refuse to give it). As consent is given (or withheld) at the start of the therapy process, this would not seem to skew the sample of available material particularly towards 'favourable' outcomes (although those offering consent might be considered to be demonstrating more willingness to be open and co-operative). Another possible source of 'bias' would be from agencies being only willing to allow access to work that reflected favourably on the agency. This is a relevant factor in relation to one of my case examples which is a 'demonstration' piece of work by a visiting therapist. However, I was able to negotiate unconditional access to the 'library' of material held by another agency (both relative 'successes' and 'failures'), so that, overall, my sample of material may not be seen as particularly biased in this way.

Since I was reliant on the various therapists having, in a sense, conducted the interview on my behalf, I had a particular interest in those who might focus on some issues of power. On the basis of this, I negotiated permission to use two case examples from a family therapy agency which has sought to combine systemic approaches with a commitment to anti-oppressive practice and, by way of contrast, an example of the work of Salvador Minuchin, a leading exponent of the structural approach to family therapy, which focuses explicitly on issues of power, but from

a functionalist rather than a critical perspective. I have tried to achieve some diversity within this selection, including examples of work by both female and male therapists (ranging from 'expert' to 'student'), and a variety of 'presenting problems'. However, in all of the case examples, both therapist and family are white and this limits any practical observation of how the politics of racism impinge upon and determine both the experience of breakdown and the dynamics of therapy.

From a critical perspective, we may see that the videotape source material does not exist in isolation, but came to be produced within specific contexts of power relations - contexts that include the current organisation of the social formation, the specific backgrounds of each of the families and therapists concerned, and the institutional setting of the therapy within specific State and civil apparatuses. From the point of view of research, a detailed and critical analysis of any of these contexts would illuminate the content of each discourse that I am analysing. However, the converse is also true. A critical reading of the discourse should expose (some of) the ways in which what is said has been determined by the various external power relations within which the interaction takes place. It is this angle that is of most interest to me in this present study. My purpose here is not specifically to examine the effects of, say, agency politics on the practice of therapy, but to test out whether the theoretical framework is able to tease out the impact of such power relations (among others) within the discourse and changing forms of organisation that are presented during the here-and-now of the therapy sessions (as happens in relation to the impact of the Team Leader's discourse on the Watkins Family - see p.404).

Nevertheless, some brief description of the contexts in which the case studies took place is probably helpful. Two of these relate to work conducted in a specialist agency within a Social Services Department which had been involved in the application of family therapy approaches over many years. As an agency, it had considerable autonomy in defining its own working practices, but nevertheless was situated within the overall legal and discursive framework of the wider Department, particularly in relation to definitions of adequate and inadequate parenting, child abuse and strategies for child protection. On a day-to-day basis, the team worked non-hierarchically, sharing between them the roles of therapist and supervisor/consultant - although for a student therapist, there would be a more formal (and hierarchical) supervision arrangement with a member to the team. However, the team would ultimately be accountable for their work to Social Services management - particularly with respect to choice of referrals and definitions of 'succesful' outcomes, and in relation to any issues relating to child protection (e.g. use of legal proceedings).

The normal working practice would be for one team member to act as therapist with a particular family, while other members of the team offered 'live' consultation (via a video link or one-way screen), and there was agreement for consultants to interrupt the session and speak to the therapist at any point, if this was thought to be desirable. Over and above this, the therapist would leave for consultation prior to the end of each session in order to devise an 'intervention' - an agreed speech - which s/he would then deliver to the family before they left. Such practice may be seen to be typical of systemic family therapy

aproaches. As we saw earlier, this places family members in a position of some relative powerlessness - subject to the authority of the therapist who is in turn subject to control by the hidden consultation team. This hierarchy of power is reinforced by the use of technology (the video camera or one-way screen) and the ritual and secret way in which communication takes place between therapist and consultants.

The case example involving Minuchin as therapist takes place within a context that places him in a clear position of power over the family members. The family have already been receiving therapy from another family therapist who, finding herself stuck, has invited the family to take part in a one-off session with Minuchin. Thus he is already placed in a position of 'expert', not only in relation to the family, but also in relation to their existing therapist: family members are already 'two-down' with respect to him in the way that the session has been set up. (It is also significant that Minuchin, as a man, is brought in to take over from a woman who is perhaps perceived as lacking sufficient authority to shift the current family organisation). It is also known by the family from the outset that they are taking part in a semi-public 'demonstration' of family therapy skills - that the tape will be made available for training and research purposes (although there would be an undertaking to preserve confidentiality). In a real sense, Minuchin is made 'master' of the situation. He is not accountable within any agency hierarchy; all authority is delegated to him as a visiting expert (and as a man) to bring about change within the family organisation.

The process of viewing

As we have seen, videotapes may provide particularly valuable information on processes taking place in the here-and-now: who speaks and who is silent, who interrupts and who is interrupted, who deals with practical tasks while others speak, who nods agreement and who shuts off, and who uses "I" and who uses "We". This combines to provide evidence about moment-by-moment changes in the externally presented consistency (and the internal organisation) of the subjectivity of a family during the process of therapy. Nevertheless, the process of viewing such material is far from straightforward - aspects such as organisation and power relations must be conceptualised before they can become evident to the viewer.

Initially, one is faced with a potentially infinite quantity of phenomenal data - not just the words that are spoken, but the way they are spoken, and all the non-verbal gestures, movements and expressions that accompany them, and not just those of the speaker, but of all those present. The process of selecting and giving significance to particular items of data depends on using some perceptual and conceptual framework, whether this be informed by prevailing ideology ('common sense'), by systems theory or by some critical perspective. In general, whereas a systemic viewing looks for a consistencies and patterns within current interaction, a critical viewing looks for contradictions and signs of inequalities - evidence of how a currently dominant pattern may have changed over time, and how, in the here-and-now process of the session, it may be being contested, undermined or renegotiated.

For me, the process of viewing involved a number of stages. The first of these was a process of unlearning - deliberately not making sense of what was going on within the frameworks that remained the most familiar to me - those of 'common sense' and systems theory. I had to discard conventional ways of focusing on 'patterns' and consistencies in the interactions observed - whether derived from systemic or from 'common sense' assumptions about how families operate and what is important within this. The painstaking process of transcribing each videotape was itself valuable in disrupting my pre-existing ways of viewing. Somewhat arbitrarily, it reduced the sheer quantity of data with which I was dealing, giving particular emphasis to the actual words that were spoken and screening out much of the potential non-verbal data.

Over and above this, the process of transcription forced me to give equal emphasis to each and every word that was spoken: the aside that was ignored by everyone else had to be transcribed just as diligently as the statement made by the dominant speaker which was attracting general attention. In this way, the inconsistent elements that did not fit in with the dominant organisation could not so easily escape recognition (although they may have been overlooked both by the systemic perspectives of therapists and by the 'common sense' perspectives of other family members). Such conflicts and inconsistencies would formerly have tended to escape my notice, because of the particular conceptual 'lens' that I would have been using to interpret what was going on. In practice, many such details can represent instances where established patterns are being contested and relationships renegotiated - clues as to the shifting matrix of power relationships.

The next stage of my viewing process was to encounter each spoken word or gesture, to some degree, 'afresh' and without preconception - stripped of my normal methods of structuring and responding to them. I allowed myself to interact with the material in a number of different ways, each informing the other to some degree. I noted any intuitive or emotional responses to what was in front of me. Did a particular word or phrase, an awkward pause or lack of response, trigger some reaction within me - perhaps fear or anger, confusion or frustration, or perhaps just a sense of something 'not being quite right'? Such reactions might draw my attention to some element of what was going on that a more 'rational' analysis might have overlooked. I allowed myself to be speculative in suggesting possible meanings underlying particular utterances. Many of these would subsequently have to be discarded due to lack of any convincing evidence; however, some might lead me to see signs of oppression or resistance that would otherwise have been hidden from me.

By contrast, I also sought to comb my source material in more systematic ways, using the various elements of my theoretical framework to see if any of these could make sense of what had actually been spoken - what were the implications of the words used (or avoided) in terms of power relationships and the minute-by-minute organisation of family and personal subjectivity. For example, I looked at people's use of pronouns, and active or passive sentence constructions, to indicate whether they were speaking as a person in their own right of on behalf of others. I looked at how they were addressed by others - for instance, were they invited to speak as Mum, as wife, or by their own

name. I looked at the order of speaking and who spoke on what topics; who shared their thoughts and who shared their feelings. I looked for particular words, such as 'perfect', 'try' or 'please' as indicators of possible personality adaptations, and 'helpless' or 'violent' as indicators of possible role positions.

Over and above this, I was interested in evidence of external determination of the positions taken within the observed interaction: for instance, information on material constraints, reproduction of elements of patriarchal, racist or capitalist ideologies, or the construction of identity in terms such of those reminiscent of 'The Name of the Father', or 'Good/Bad' images of femininity. I was also interested in any evidence that the process of therapy was being determined by the power relations of the agency context in which it was taking place - for instance, references to possible State intervention. Furthermore, despite the therapists' emphasis on finding out about the patterning of interaction in the here-and-now, various participants managed to insert material which gives clues as to how their personal or family breakdown had come about. Although the respective therapists had tended not to pay this much attention, I was able to examine it for evidence as to how particular configurations of power relationships and personality adaptations may have come about.

My analysis of the videotape material has necessarily involved processes of editing in order to reduce the overall quantity of data to manageable proportions. As we have seen, the process of transcription gave emphasis to the spoken aspects of family interaction as against the non-

verbal aspects of their discourse. Over and above this, I have edited the transcripts themselves to varying degrees in order to limit the overall length of the analyses. In one case example, the first session in reproduced almost in its entirety so as to provide an overview of the total process - including both periods of stuckness as well as moments of change, whether repressive or empowering. However, only excerpts from the other two case examples are reproduced and these focus on material that either provides evidence in relation to the process of breakdown, or of the impact, empowering or otherwise, of the therapist's interventions. In editing the transcripts, I have also changed all names and removed any identifying details in order to ensure confidentiality.

These analyses are intended to be 'critical', not in any pejorative sense, but in the sense of using theoretical concepts that expose the underlying dynamics of power relations. It is not for me to put down, in any sense, any of the work that is being analysed. I assume that each therapist is working in good faith to improve conditions for family members, given her/his subjection within a specific agency context and particular theoretical and practical frameworks - a position that may enable her/him to see certain issues more clearly than others. Even with the benefit of more critical analytical frameworks, therapists would still be constrained by their own (often unconscious) internalisation of ideology and their location within structures of race, class and gender oppression - a location that may be crucially determined by their position within an agency that may form part of some State or civil apparatus.

10: THE HIRST FAMILY

The family comprises Faith, Martin and their two children, Colin (aged 3) and Lynne (aged 6 months). They have referred themselves for help with Colin on advice from a day-nursery. Although Martin is a small businessman of some kind, Faith's employment position would place her as working class. The therapist is a male student, and the session is supervised by two female consultants from behind a one-way screen. The transcript of the first session is reproduced almost in its entirety.

[Martin returns consent form to Therapist. Faith sits down with Lynne on her lap. Colin plays out of the picture.]

T: [To Martin] Well actually you've signed the second half of this, which is agreement to something that you may want a lot longer to think about.

M: The second one there, what is that? Training?

T: Yes.

F: That's if they can read it. [Looks towards Martin, laughing.]

[Martin sits down]

M: This one says it's going to be scrubbed out at the end and the other one says they can keep it. I think it's O.K.

F: You can do what you want with it. There's nothing private.

T: Well, O.K. But it may be something you want to consider after a while. So, in that case, you may want to take that back.

In this opening, it is already clear that Martin acts as the head of the household, the guardian and controller of family subjectivity. It is to him that questions of confidentiality are addressed - a crucial issue for maintaining subjectivity (and the therapist inadvertently reinforces this stereotypical form of organisation). There seems to be no question that it is he (and only he) who has to sign to open up the private domain of domestic organisation to outside scrutiny (although he is backed in this decision by Faith). The very fact that the interview starts with the two men transacting about the signing of the consent

form, tends to marginalise Faith. Thus, while the therapist's offer of time to reconsider provides choice for the family subjectivity as a whole, it does nothing to empower Faith so that she be included within this decision making. Had he addressed Faith specifically in his remark, this might have precipitated a small, but significant, shift within family subjectivity.

T: [Looking at both Martin and Faith] You got here all right today?
M: Yes.
F: It was a bit confusing.
M: Coming back from [ ] I decided to take a short cut and ended up in the back roads of [ ] somewhere [laughs].
F: I'm a sort of a street person myself.
M: Is there an ashtray - can I smoke?
T: I think there's one there you can use. [Pause.]

By including Faith in his question, the therapist may have given her the necessary recognition to enable her to answer in her own right and take the risk of contradicting her husband (about whether the journey had, in fact, been that straightforward). This constitutes a real shift in the second-by-second organisation of the family's subjectivity. (However, unless such transitory shifts of power can be supported and built upon, they may not begin to challenge the underlying power relations of the subjectivity.) In this instance, Martin responds so as to re-establish himself in the position of authority - as the one who was making the decisions about the journey (albeit incompetently). Faith allows him to do so and thereby retain control within the conventionally masculine transactional sphere of making decisions (acting on the basis of thinking), although she asserts her (conventionally subordinate) 'feminine' power base of intuition - being "a sort of street person" (acting on the basis of feelings).

T: [To Faith] I know I talked to you on the phone the other day and we arranged to meet for an appointment and the one thing that you were saying was that you noticed that there had been some improvement.
F: Yes, there's been a drastic improvement in C's behaviour as it happens. We were on the verge of not coming today. It's just that I'm afraid that I'm so on the edge that I'm afraid that he will be hurt.

It emerges that it was Faith who made the initial contact with outside agencies. This would accord with her conventional responsibility, within patriarchal ideology, for all internal matters to do with family and children. Although such responsibility is accompanied by very little real power, it nevertheless provides her with the authority to make the contact - the plea for help - that signalled the partial breakdown of their subjectivity as a family. Implicitly accepting this gendering of family subjectivity, the therapist invites Faith to occupy this position in the here-and-now. Had he attempted to challenge this gendering - and address such questions to Martin - this could have been doubly disempowering to Faith - effectively taking away from her the small degree of authority that she currently possesses within the current organisation of family subjectivity.

The therapist's move places Faith within a contradictory position. On the one hand, her responsibility would seem to place her in the position of defending the family boundaries as far as possible from professional interference - and it is from this position that she suggests that everything is now under control. However, through actually being allowed a voice, she is momentarily able to switch to the feeling level and articulate her own distress ("I'm afraid that I'm so on the edge"). She is then unable to sustain this, presumably because she does not feel empowered to speak on behalf of herself (only her children) and she does

not feel sufficiently supported by the therapist to continue transacting at the level of emotionality (he has not used this level himself). She is trapped by the only power that family subjectivity does bestow on her, her power as parent/carer of her children. She perhaps sees no alternative but to project her own sense of danger and urgency via a family member who is even more vulnerable than herself: her son Colin ("he will be hurt"). By placing him as a potential victim of abuse, she threatens the possibility of a more serious breach in the family subjectivity, one which is much more likely to be heard within prevailing ideology than is her distress on its own. In doing so, she also translates the issue back into the transactional level of activity, a level at which she is more likely to draw a response from the men.

F: [Continuing] I said to Martin that, whatever it is, it's down to Safeways. Because Safeways have rearranged their shelves and I keep forgetting to buy the things he used to like for lunch before nursery. One of those things was spaghetti. He was overdosing on spaghetti, always wanting spaghetti. And then I did have one tin in. And the last tin I gave him, he was eating it and he was sort of throwing it up, you know. So I said, "Don't you want it?" and he said "I want it but I just can't swallow it". And I thought maybe his body's had that much, he's rejecting it. And I stopped him. And I've seen a drastic improvement, but I didn't relate it back to that until the other day when I looked in the cupboard and saw that there was no spaghetti. And then I remembered that it's been ages since he had it - about two months back. About a week or two after I spoke to the lady on the 'phone, that was when it started. I mean, it is embarrassing because he is well behaved compared to the way he was, you know. He has his moments, but I'm not.... I'm so content, I'm still just thinking, why? D'you know what I mean? [Martin reaches over and strokes baby's head on Faith's knee.]

"I said to Martin..." may indicate that Faith is attempting to redefine the problem with Colin in a way that is acceptable to Martin. What follows is in such contradiction to her previous remark that it would suggest that she had stepped too far out of line: in 'blowing the

whistle' on the real level of danger in the family, she was breaching family subjectivity in a way that was unacceptable to Martin (and for which she might be subsequently punished). In a metaphorical way, her story expresses her powerlessness, in that she actually attributes responsibility to the supermarket for the changes in Colin's behaviour. Her conclusion that she is now "so content", when we already know from her that she is "on the edge", suggests that, in her fear, she is organising herself according to the Please driver, desperately trying to placate Martin. Martin's gesture of patting the baby's head may be an (unconscious) response to this, perhaps representing his desire to pat Faith on the head for being 'a good girl' and pleasing him by saying the right things.

T: You believe that the food you were giving him....
F: It's possible. I mean I didn't really want to get on that bandwaggon because I know that there's some serious cases that do relate that to it. But I also think it is a little misused, you know what I mean? So what I'm trying to say is that it's part of it, having seen that. I haven't risked giving him any spaghetti, to go back to the way it was, d'you know what I mean? But other than that, he's been quite good. I'm wondering if it was me that was... d'you know what I mean?

The therapist does not support Faith, at the level of emotionality, to unravel the contradiction in what she had said about how she felt and to speak of her distress directly. Instead, he responds at the level of discourse (checking out her beliefs and explanations). Although not perhaps as supportive as a response to her feelings, this nevertheless enables her to recognise the possibility that the food "bandwaggon" can be "a little misused", and almost that she might herself be responsible for the changes that had taken place: "I'm wondering if it was me that was...".

T: [To Martin] And how do you feel about it. Do you agree?
M: Well, really, as I say, I'm out most of the time anyway during the day and Colin is in bed by between seven and eight. So really, as regards me, it's.... There are times when he can be... can be a bit of a.... Most of the time it's when he comes back from his grandmother's.
T: Yes.
M: Because she lets him do as he likes.
T: [To Martin] This is your....
M: No, no.
F: It's mine.
M: It's her own fault. It's not that she tries to enforce control over him, its just she lets him do what he wants. And of course when he gets back he thinks he can do that, so.... [Looking directly at Therapist] That sort of thing has to be wiped out.
T: Yes.

It is interesting that the therapist addresses his question to Martin in terms of "How do you feel?" rather than the more conventional man-to-man discourse of "What do you think?" Maybe he had, albeit unconsciously, picked up Faith's need to communicate at this level, particularly with Martin. However, Martin is clearly wrongfooted by the question: it implicitly challenges the gendering of the family subjectivity by asking him, the man, what he "feels" about childcare issues. After thrashing around a little, he reasserts his patriarchal dominance, and "closes the ranks" of his family's subjectivity, by constructing an external threat: his mother-in-law. His choice of target is significant, since Faith's mother could represent her main source of external (female) support, and a source of authority that might challenge his own.

The issue on which Martin chooses to focus - one which was brought up by the implications of the therapist's question - is straightforwardly that of (his) patriarchal power: the right of a man in his position to demand that the women (in this case, wife and mother-in-law) ensure that the child does not "do what he wants" - a process of two-fold oppression.

Interestingly, he does not set himself up as the author of this power, more as its agent. He speaks directly from the subject position that is signified by "The Name of the Father". The devastating command "That sort of thing has to be wiped out" is delivered entirely impersonally, as a 'universal truth' rather than as his particular idea. He looks directly to the male therapist for his assent and for his confirmation that this ideology is shared. Perhaps himself feeling threatened as a man if he stepped too far out of line, the therapist seems to be hooked in to his own (patriarchally defined) "Be Strong" driver and gives the required confirmation.

T: It would be useful to me if we could recap on some of the ingredients and what was happening beforehand really. As you see, it may be that this is just a passing phase and in that case it may be something that could crop up in the future as well. I'd like to know, to start with, what was happening, what was the worst thing that was happening?
[Colin moves in and starts to play at the table]

F: What made me phone was that a few weeks ago my friends came over and I allowed them to go up to Colin's room. You know a lot of folks don't let the kids go up to the bedrooms in case of the mess it makes. But I don't give a sod. If he makes a mess, he makes a mess. It doesn't matter. But he did... he went and blitzed the room with Jason - books off every shelf, toys emptied out of the toybox in one big pile. Goes upstairs. He's got his trousers off. Jason's got his trousers off. And they're standing in the toybox fighting. Nice fighting. So I says, "Forget it, Liz. You go home if you've got things to do and I'll pile it all in". Anyway, I was picking up the books and I says, "What the bloody hell, these are wet. You haven't been in the bathroom have you?" He always plays with water. So I thought the little sod's destroying his books. That annoyed me. So I was looking around and this water was coming again, and I thought hang on a minute and I stood up. He was weeing on me. I wasn't having that so I whacked him one. So I was a bit more embarrassed because my mate saw it and it wasn't very nice. That was it. That was the end of that. So, as I say, his behaviour was bad.
[Baby cries and Faith attends to her. Colin leaves the table and returns with a toy tea-set. Therapist checks back what happened and Faith retells it as Colin hands out pretend cups of tea to Faith, Martin and then the therapist. Each in turn thank him for the tea.]

F: I couldn't believe what he was doing to me. He didn't feel guilty about it. He didn't say sorry. When I turned round and looked at him, he just carried on. I just whacked him one.

Rather than continuing the discourse of patriarchal oppression (and thereby further alienating Faith), the therapist pauses and re-establishes his control of the process by returning to the territory in which Faith is allowed to have a voice: childcare. However, by not confronting Martin's position and by inviting Faith to speak from the position of 'mother', this move only reinforces the patriarchal power relations of the existing organisation of family subjectivity. Faith's ensuing discourse indicates her extreme extreme powerlessness as a woman within this organisation, such that three year old Colin is able to 'piss' on her, and not even "feel guilty about it". (In a real sense, he may be seen to be trying out the position of "The Phallus" in relation to a construction of his mother as a "bad" object.) She has clearly become so disempowered that she is unable to deal with this situation from a position of Controlling Parent: she cannot confront his behaviour in a caring way, or point out her feelings to him. Instead, it would seem that she is so threatened that she lashes out from the Aggressor role position. This also represents a desperate attempt to defend against the possibility that an outsider might see that Colin was out of her control: "I was a bit more embarrassed because my mate saw it and it wasn't very nice".

Crucial to Faith's sense of desperation and shame seems not so much to be the threat to her own subjectivity (her sense of self perhaps could not sink much lower), but the threat to the subjectivity of her family. Colin's public behaviour threatened to breach the ideologically

necessary illusion of the family as a unitary responsible subject, able to transact with outsiders in a cohesive and coherent manner. In practice, a woman in Faith's position will often look to her immediate survival, not so much in terms of how to protect or enhance her own personal subjectivity, but in terms of how she can prop up the family subjectivity, and hence secure her place within that organisation, however damaging and oppressive that position might actually be for her.

T: Has that ever happened before?
F: No, but we had bad trouble with his toilet training and it got worse when I was having Lynne - messing himself and everything. I mean, he wears a nappy now at night, but I don't care because nobody sees him. I ain't got time to wash the sheets every day, so I leave him be. But in the daytime he was messing himself. It really was laziness - he was sitting talking.
[Colin mimes giving food out to the therapist.]
I kept saying, "Maybe he's forgotten, or maybe his stools were loose and he can't control them". But he was getting sneaky - he was doing it and he was running off.
T: Did you tell Martin about it?
F: With this, Martin whacked him for it. So he started getting to the point where he wouldn't do it when Martin was in the house. He'd do it when I was in the house. He knew when Martin was there you use the toilet. When Mum was there you just do it all in your trousers. Three or four times a day I was cleaning him and it was making me sick. I was having to get down on my hands and knees and clean him - try and take them off him, with all this muck, and while I'm doing it, he's shouting, "You won't hit me, Mum!" And I haven't been the one that's whacked him for it.... Of course, [Gestures towards Martin] he's shouting at me for not hitting him for it. But I kept thinking - when the kid's doing that to himself when he had been pretty clean.... I was looking for an answer, but there didn't seem to be one, and he was going downhill and downhill. I wasn't showing with the baby so he couldn't have known.

The interpretation of violence in such contexts is not straightforward. As Alice Miller demonstrated, it may be seen as an ideologically sanctioned exercise of control by intimidation, particularly if undertaken in a cold and unemotional (i.e. patriarchal) manner. As such, it would constitute a transaction that reinforces the power

differential between the parent, operating from the Persecutor role, and the child, responding in the Victim role. On the other hand, violence may also be construed as 'child abuse' - as a parent going out of control and hence undermining 'proper' parental authority. Such a breakdown may follow from the parent experiencing her/himself as so disempowered in relation to the child that s/he attacks it from the exaggerated Child subject position of the Aggressor role. It would seem that the instance of Martin's consistent threat of violence towards Colin is predominantly an example of the former type of transaction, whereas Faith's earlier retaliation is more an example of the latter.

In this instance, we may see the extent to which the internal relations of the family are dominated by the rule of the (absent) father, the one who dictates that any suggestion that people should be allowed to do as they want "has to be wiped out". The interactions between Faith and Colin seem to focus on power - that which both of them must feel has been taken away from them. It is safer for Colin to get Faith down on her hands and knees clearing up his mess than it is for him to take on the embodiment of patriarchal power: Martin as head of the household. There is little room for developing relationships based on mutual respect as Faith does not confront his abuse of her. Colin sets Faith up in a position of patriarchal power and simultaneously undermines this by exposing her inability (or unwillingness) to employ violence from the partiarchally prescribed position: "You won't hit me, Mum".

However, at one point, Faith does move out of the subject position dictated by the patriarchal discourse, no longer allowing herself to be

defined by Martin's "shouting at" her "for not hitting him". Instead, she finds enough support to subject herself in an Adult position that, for perhaps the first time in this session, reflects some of her own capacities and interests: "I kept thinking..." From there she is able to consider why Colin was "doing that to himself" (instead of her simply reacting to what he was doing to her). Sadly, her Adult thinking is still so contaminated by her internalisation of patriarchal ideology, that she is unable to see the real source of Colin's oppression, and instead, as many women do, turns to blame some change in herself, even though she "wasn't showing with the baby so he couldn't have known".

T: [To Martin] What did you think about it?
M: I knew it shouldn't be happening.
F: [To Martin] Can we swap now? [Passes baby over to Martin.]
T: And so you got into some rows about it?
M: Not rows as such, it was just a....
F: Conflict.
M: Just a conflict, that was all. What I'd do and what she'd do. It wasn't ongoing rows. As rows go, we don't have any as such. It was just a passing phase.... You get back down to it, it's not an ongoing thing for days on end. And we didn't hold a grudge or anything like that.
F: No we don't.
M: You've got to get the bandwaggon rolling, so to speak.

On the second occasion that the therapist seeks to involve Martin in childcare matters, he does so in a conventional manner (man-to-man), asking the question at the level of thinking rather than feeling. This offers Martin the possibility of retaining his distance as household head and responding with another somewhat impersonal declaration of masculine authority: "I know it shouldn't be happening". It is interesting that, at the same time that the therapist is seeking to engage Martin in childcare matters, Faith mirrors this at the level of here-and-now activity: she publicly gives Martin the responsibility for

looking after the baby. The therapist supports this emergence of a more flexible and less unequal organisation by raising the possibility of conflict and disagreement. There then follows a brief airing of the issue, in the form of a conflict between Faith and Martin about whether or not they have conflicts. Faith signals her opposition and then retreats, while Martin performs semantic somersaults in order to restore the image of a unified and male dominated family subjectivity, underpinned by a corporate "Be Strong" driver, which he symbolises as a "bandwaggon" (a juggernaut or a relic from the Wild West?).

T: So that stopped when you actually got him sorted out with his toileting. That stopped until the time....
F: What stopped? Messing himself?
T: Yes.
F: He only stopped about two months ago - slowly.
T: And then after that, recently, prior to you getting in touch with the Centre here, that was the occasion when....
F: He's got this fascination when He-Man comes on telly. There's very little I can do to stop him watching it.
[Martin, with baby on his knee, reaches out to Colin, off-camera.] And quite honestly, when children's programmes come on, I need them, you know what I mean? To turn the programmes on and he can just sit and do as he likes.
[Looks over at Colin.] And he's watching all these programmes and that.
[Leans over to speak confidentially to the therapist, as Colin goes up to Martin.] And he's got this fascination with [whispers] blood. Anything - he's got to know whether it's got blood. Have flowers got blood? He's got to know.
[Colin talks quietly to Martin.]

The therapist reverts back to addressing the old-style family subjectivity, with Faith as spokeswoman on childcare matters. Colin's aggression and protest (by which Faith had sought to indicate that there was something amiss within the family) is subsumed by the therapist within one of the conventional discourses of child care - the enforced internalisation of parental domination through toilet training. Faith

reluctantly goes along with this 'normalisation' of what had been happening ("He only stopped about two months ago - slowly"), but then raises further examples of Colin's behaviour to suggest that the family situation is far from 'normal'. She also alludes to there being a connection between her inability to control Colin and her powerlessness to stop his identification with the symbols of patriarchal domination that are available to him through the media, such as "He-Man" on television: "There's very little I can do to stop him watching it". The all-embracing domination of patriarchal ideology over their family life is demonstrated by the apparent paradox that the only occasion on which Faith can allow Colin just to "sit and do as he likes" is when he when he is being inculcated with the masculine values of violence and blood. It is interesting that, at the same point that Faith is explaining this, Martin and Colin are actually demonstrating their close identity and alliance, through their physical contact and private conversations.

F: He's getting this sick fascination for it.
[Colin leaves Martin and goes to play in the corner near Faith.]
And then the morning I went to see the health visitor. [Indicates Lynne] She's got reflux, she's vomiting a lot. He started taking on this thing of wanting to revert back to his drinking cup with the lid on and lying in my arms. I thought fair enough, let him do it - it's not hurting anyone - so I let him do it. He was on about being sick, but he couldn't. This one day, he turns round and says "I want to be sick, Mummy. I want to be sick all over Lynne". And I thought, "You dirty little pig". I went and saw the health visitor. I just told her about it. "That's not right really", she said, "I'll send you to these people; tell them what he's doing: the spite and the disobedience. If they can help you, they'll help you".

Faith still seems to lack the support to express herself directly at the level of feelings within the session. Instead she uses words in her discourse that are emotive - they imply the strength of feeling involved but leave to the listener the task of making the connections and, if

this is done, actually feeling the feelings on her behalf (itself a process of projection). She describes a theme of "sickness" within the family, perhaps expresing indirectly that she is "sick" of the current organisation of the family. She projects responsibility for expressing this "sickness" on to Lynne and Colin. She starts with Colin's "sick" fascination with blood, and moves on to the baby being sick. Finally, we reach a point where Faith locates her feelings of anger and revulsion with Colin ("You dirty little pig") for, in turn, expressing anger and revulsion towards the baby ("I want to be sick all over Lynne"). Making sense of this chain, we have strong indications that Faith may herself feel angry and revolted towards her children, but is unable to express this directly within the existing organisation of family subjectivity (she is constructed as a 'loving mother' who could not possibly have such feelings).

Colin's willingness to accept the role of expressing the "sickness" may be twofold: it may both make him important to Faith (acting as the mouthpiece for her feelings) and allow him to express any of his own feelings of jealousy and resentment towards the baby. However, by representing Faith's 'unacceptable' feelings, he pays the price of being rejected by her, and becoming the sole repository of such feelings within the organisation of family subjectivity - in fact, taking on the position of 'scapegoat'. Now we begin to get a picture of how the family's subjectivity is organised at the level of emotionality, and hence the 'danger' associated with Colin's position: why, unless there is some rearrangement of overall subjectivity, Colin might indeed "be hurt". The degree of danger is such that Faith is impelled to breach

the family's subjectivity by going to the health visitor and admitting that their internal relations are out of control. The danger is also sufficient for her to be able to involve Martin in the process.

F: It wasn't what he was saying, it was his total behaviour, attitude. I was in [maternity] hospital having my check-up. When I went in for my check-up, he stood in front of these two old ladies and says....
[Colin interrupts Faith and she responds to him for a moment.]
He stood in front of them and just turned round and went, "Can I punch these two old ladies in the stomach?" I just wanted to die. And he was starting to do it on the street. He did hit an old woman for nothing, walking down the [ ] Road. I said I could have died. He'd just turned round and whopped this old lady for nothing. I think she'd smiled at him and he'd whacked her. [Pause.] It was just things like that - getting aggressive.

Just as Faith may be displacing her anger at her situation on to someone in a weaker power position than herself (Colin), so Colin, in turn, is unsupported in any direct expression of anger within the organisation of the family and so may be seeking to displace it on to 'soft' external targets. Almost intuitively, he may identify "old women" as occupying an even more powerless position than himself within the current patriarchal structuring of society. However, by selecting an external target, Colin's 'protest' behaviour also has the effect of breaching family subjectivity making public the family's internal distress.

T: [To Martin] What was the worst thing for you?
[Martin returns the baby to Faith for bottle feeding.]
M: What did annoy me was when he was taking it out of Lynne at times - squeezing her hand or squeezing the bottle....
F: Biting.
M: Or biting.
F: He did bite her once.
M: It was more embarrassing than anything else, especially when there were other kids present and it was in front of you. That was the most annoying thing of the lot. [Pause]

The therapist's return to Martin at this point finds him (literally) holding the baby. It is interesting to speculate what the impact would have been on the family's subjectivity if the therapist had supported Martin's tentative flexibility of role by suggesting that he feed his own baby, rather than passing her back when she became a little demanding. With the act of passing the baby over, Martin once more assumes the position of household head, guarding and controlling the family's subjectivity. It is from this position that it is distressing not so much that Colin bites Lynne, but that he does so in public: "it was more embarrassing than anything else". Nevertheless, he is not quite so distant and impersonal as before. Although he ends up expressing his position in terms of "It was..." and "That was...", he starts off with a statement that Colin's behaviour "did annoy me", thereby momentarily expressing his own feeling and distinguishing his personal subjectivity from his position as household head.

M: But, as I say, I wasn't there a lot of the time. It seems as though, when I come back, then everything changes. It's just the old thing, if I get home, that's it. Things have to change. I'm just going on what Faith told me when I come in.
T: [To Faith] Is that right, when Martin gets home, do things change?
F: Yes. It went through a stage when Colin refused to kiss his Dad. Just overnight ... didn't want his Dad to kiss me and sometimes walking off on Martin and me and sitting in front of the telly, refusing to answer us.
[Interruption due to baby crying; both Faith and Martin involved in dealing with this.]
F: I never intended to do that - to keep him in front of the telly, but it's the best baby-sitter I've found. He's not constantly in front of it by any means. Some of the things, like pictures of births, I keep him away from. He doesn't need to know that.

It seems to be important for Martin to maintain his position as head of the household by discounting his responsibility in the field of parenting and he is keen to emphasise his absence: "As I say, I wasn't

there a lot of the time". When the therapist asks Faith to confirm the extent of the impact of Martin's homecoming, he implicitly supports the possibility of Martin's involvement in this sphere. Faith is able to use this greater flexibility in family subjectivity to comment not just on her relationship with Colin, but also on Colin's relationship with Martin ("refused to kiss his Dad") and on his relationship with them as a partner subjectivity ("Didn't want his Dad to kiss me"). Although staying within the constraints of a discourse-about-activity (who kisses who), she is able to allude to the state of emotional relationships in the family. As before, she seems unable to own her feelings (whether or not *she* would actually want to kiss Martin) and again there is evidence of Colin acting out a projection of her forbidden feelings.

After the interruption, the family's subjectivity reverts to its former organisation. It is Faith alone who has to feel responsible, and inadequate, in relation to all matters of childcare. The pathos of the television being "the best baby-sitter I've found" indicates how utterly unsupported she feels as a parent. Her particular concern for Colin (as a male) to kept away from "pictures of births" (rather than, say, pornography or violence) may connect with her earlier concern about his "sick fascination" for "blood" - a theme that emerged at the same time as other feelings to do with the new baby. Her need to establish such a taboo against male "fascination", may perhaps reflect some abusive (and male-dominated) experiences of childbirth that inducted her, in a particularly graphic manner, into the position of mother-object (for a fuller account of the male 'colonisation' of childbirth practices, see Tew 1990).

T: [To Faith] When he's occupied, do you feel quite happy with things?
F: It depends. If it's been a really bad day, and I've just about had enough, I can't even unwind until half-eight - and he's gone to bed at half-seven - easily an hour after. Even if he's sitting quiet, I still really feel tight, tired - my eyes and my head are just like a drum - and I keep thinking, "Martin's coming in now, you've got to leave it". Because Martin leaves everything behind and I don't want him to keep walking in and always seeing a lad that's fairly reasonably behaved in front of him and, sort of, me - you know, me. He's come home to find me crying and mad and angry. And the dinner hasn't been done and I'm just smashing around the house. Just trying to work it out because I can't see - I can't see what I've done in the day. I might have done a lot with him and there again it might have been a day when I thought, "Oh, sod you! I just can't be bothered". [To therapist] D'you know what I mean?

For the first time in the session, the therapist addresses Faith at the level of feelings. With this direct support being offered, Faith is empowered, for the first time, to speak from her own subjectivity, in her own right, being able to move fluidly to and fro between transactional levels, expressing both her feelings and her thoughts. She is able to describe her feelings of frustration and anger that derive from her being subjected in the conventional ideological positions of housewife and mother. Colin ceases for a moment to act as the projection of her anger - she is able to own it herself - until the final part of her speech when, perhaps feeling unsure of her support, she seeks the reassurance of the therapist: "D'you know what I mean?"

Because of the way that her subjectivity is constituted at the level of ideology, she is constrained by the frame of reference of her oppression rather than being able to speak about it from a clear and uncontaminated Adult position. She constructs her anger as strange and inexplicable, and directs it mainly at herself for not being the perfect wife and mother, rather than at the sources of her oppression. Her survival depends on her fitting her subjectivity into the prevailing structure of

ideological relations, so she continues to use her internalised Defining Parent subject position to blind her to the reality of what is going on around her, "I can't see - I can't see what I've done in the day". Nevertheless, this blinding is not total: she is aware that what she sees and feels does not make sense, so she is left "just trying to work it out". It is clear that the level of oppression that she is experiencing, and the strain of maintaining herself within the ideologically prescribed subject position, are such that her own subjectivity is stretched "like a drum" to the point where it seems likely to snap - to break down - at any moment.

T: What do you think Martin thinks when he comes in like that?
F: Well, when we were going through the stage when Colin wouldn't kiss him, I know Martin was hurt. I was hurt by it. But I know Martin was hurt. And then he reversed it and he'd go to Martin and he wouldn't go to me. And I think Martin was just feeling sort of.... I don't think Martin thought it was so serious, because I'm pretty quick to temper anyway, you see. [To Martin] I was before, wasn't I?
M: Mmm.
F: I was pretty quick to things like that, so whether Martin just.... I often felt that he sort of.... "Oh this is just an excuse because you haven't done anything all day". [To therapist] D'you know what I mean?
T: Yes.

By couching his question at the level of thinking (and in terms of what Martin might be thinking) the therapist effectively withdraws Faith's permission to express her own feelings directly. Furthermore, by asking Faith to speak for Martin, rather than asking him directly, he sets Faith up to represent the united facade of their partner/parenting subjectivity that is required by prevailing ideology. Such an indirect form of question may be seen to derive from the "circular questioning" approach of the Milan school - and, in this instance, may be seen to be

disempowering to Faith. She speaks as if she fears that she is about to be caught out and expose their differences (as Colin had done by switching his allegiances). Faith desperately holds their subjectivity together by projecting her feelings on to Martin and vice versa, so as to maintain the appearance that both feel the same feelings at the same time: "I know Martin was hurt by it. I was hurt by it". However, she also seeks to maintain the gendered way in which the family subjectivity must be seen to transact, and so differentiates herself as the emotional one (I'm pretty quick to temper anyway, you see"). Locked in by the projective nature of the therapist's original question, she is now unable to express directly how she feels towards Martin: her "temper" is now only evidence of her personal weakness. Ultimately, this places her in the paradoxical position of being the one who has to express, on Martin's behalf, his anger towards her: "This is just an excuse because you haven't done anything all day".

F: Maybe something hadn't been done and that would drive me really mad. Not his attitude, but the fact that I hadn't done it. And then, by the time that he came in, I was so tired, I'd sit and relax, get him to bed. Then I didn't want to do nothing. I could see things waiting to be done and I kept thinking, "Sod it, I'll do it tomorrow". But I know that I wouldn't do it tomorrow. So everything around me was annoying me and I knew that Martin - sort of since I've stopped working and I'm at home - Martin's adopted the attitude - I mean it's not so bad until - that it's my job to be at home and d'you know what I mean? [To therapist] The sort of thing all we women have got to do to keep ourselves occupied.

Faith starts with an ideologically constructed organisation of family subjectivity in which she takes responsibility and the blame for everything, including anything that "hadn't been done". However, she then starts to challenge this and instead of directing her anger at herself, she begins to direct it, falteringly, towards Martin's

"attitude" of enforcing her powerlessness at an ideological as well as an economic level, now that she was no longer a wage earner: "It's my job to be at home". In articulating this grievance, she begins to attack the patriarchal basis of her family's organisation, and the potential significance of this is reflected, at the scale of her own subjectivity, in the sudden incoherence and disjointedness of her speech. At the end, she seems suddenly to become aware of her potential vulnerability, having said what she had said in front of a male therapist. She switches back into patriarchal ideology that discounts the economic value of housework (just a way "to keep ourselves occupied") and thereby denies her own right, as a woman, to be taken seriously, transacting at the level of activity. In doing so, she checks out the therapist's position in relation to this ideology.

T: What did you do? What was your job?
F: I've had a lot of jobs. I was a [ ]. My last job, I took on the advice of my health visitor after Colin had been born. She told me I had post-natal depression. I didn't know I had it. She said - she just spoke to me as the way we're talking now - and whatever I must have said made her think that I would be better off back at work and away from Colin. She was right, except now I feel guilty because - just in the week I was looking at a baby that was his age when I left him and I can't believe that I missed that year. [To therapist] D'you know what I mean? And I keep thinking, "Bloody Hell, did he - was he really like that?" I mean, he was walking a bit when we left him with my Mum to have all day and then I'd pick him up at night or whatever and I just can't believe I....
M: [Interrupting] It was essential that you worked then. I mean it wasn't a question of "Oh I'd better go out and get a job", because we needed the money and that's that.
F: We did need it.

By asking, "What was your job?" the therapist asserts Faith's full and equal right to enter into transactions at the level of activity. However, by only validating her as a (potential) worker, rather than making any comment on the value of her activity in the home, he fails to

confront the ideological construction of housework as 'non-work'. Nevertheless, his support is sufficient for her to be able to talk of an earlier experience of personal breakdown in a way which starts to relate this to structural factors (disempowerment due to loss of job) rather than to personal inadequacy. She connects the support that she received then, from the health visitor, with the support she is currently experiencing from the therapist: "She spoke to me as the way we're talking now".

While she recognises that what she did (in flouting the patriarchal organisation of the family) was "right" - in that it worked out for her - she reports that she has more recently fallen victim to the patriarchally defined ideology of motherhood ("I feel guilty"). It is surely not co-incidence that this happened during the period when she has been out of work again, due to the arrival of the new baby, and hence out of touch with the externally validating transactions of being in work. Perhaps exploiting this weakness, Martin intervenes to reimpose a patriarchal definition of the family's subjectivity at the economic level by defining her work as a temporary (and hence marginal) contribution to the 'family wage', that was entered into out of necessity rather than choice: "It was essential that you worked then."

M: We were abroad for a year and then came back and we never had a penny. And then Faith was pregnant, she said, so....
F: I did want to get pregnant. It wasn't a case of, "Oh God, I'm pregnant. What am I going to do?" I was quite fulfilled, over the moon. It just happened to me - it just crept up on me. I didn't have - we was in the circumstances - I'd sort of had him when I was at Mum's and we moved out of there and he was sick and nobody would believe me he was sick...
[Interruption as warmed up bottle is brought in for the baby.]

Faith describes how she started off being able to express positive feelings towards herself and had the potential to transact on a basis of mutuality with the new infant. However, her personal subjectivity came to be transformed as she was subjected in a series of oppressive transactions. Rather than sharing the experience with her, Martin implicitly blamed her for becoming pregnant: "We never had a penny. And then Faith was pregnant, she said". He was able to call upon an already existing patriarchal 'blueprint' for their parenting subjectivity: one in which responsibility for having children is located almost entirely with the woman. Although they must have been equally responsible for Colin's conception, Faith (as the one who was pregnant) was held accountable for the baby. Not only was Faith unsupported in negotiating a subjectivity as a mother that allowed her to hold on to her positive feelings, but the family's powerlessness at an economic level also made it impossible for her to insert the domestic aspect of her family's subjectivity into the ideologically prescribed slot as a separately defined and cohesive unit. Instead, she was only able to fit them (and herself) in with her mother's household. She reveals the absence of any emergent family subjectivity - any sense of her 'starting a family' - when she admits apologetically that, "I sort of had him when I was at Mum's". She then found it difficult to be taken seriously in the subject position of 'mother': "Nobody would believe me he was sick".

T: [To Martin] When did your wife give up work?
[Martin looks across at Faith.]
F: March last year. When I found out I was having Lynne.
M: The first time or the second time?
F: No, he means when.... I started work when Colin was just one. I finished last year in March. Mostly because I got the sack. I was working for [ ] and I enjoyed it. I moved to a new restaurant called [ ] and they said I had a disruptive attitude. I was

questioning too many of their policies. Which I weren't. Anyway, I came home. I was quite happy. He could afford for me to come home. [Faith passes the baby over to Martin and there is an interruption as the baby is crying.]
So I stopped last March. I found out I was having Lynne anyway. I started to look for another job or take a course. I got on a course for how to do programs for industrial computers and I passed that. Only because I was a woman and they wanted women on the course. At the same time I found out I was having her, so I rang up and said, "No" and he said, "Come back any time you like".
[Faith takes baby back and starts to feed her.]
But I said I was having her and I wanted to ... be there for him. I was going to lose him to nursery soon and I just felt he was turning out different from how I wanted him to be.
[Interruption due to baby.]
So I gave up and stayed at home. I was quite happy to. I enjoyed it.

The therapist starts with a move that not only cuts across Faith's construction of herself as a failed mother and addresses her again in the subject position of a working woman, but also invites Martin to recognise her in this position. However, this move fails to challenge the underlying patriarchal organisation, in that his language actually maintains Martin's position of control. His use of the term "your wife" in this man-to-man discourse implicitly places Martin in a position of patronage over Faith. Although Martin does not give Faith any direct recognition as a working woman, he does indicate to Faith that she can answer for herself. The shift is sufficient for Faith to be able to speak in her own right about how she dealt assertively with the attempts by management to subject her within transactions of subordination. However, it is ironic that her only power base in this situation derived from her option of giving up work and appearing to be "quite happy" to subject herself within patriarchal economic relations at home. In the here-and-now of the session, she balances her account of her loss of access to the world of ecomonic activity (and her consequent dependency on Martin) with the action of passing him the baby to hold for a minute.

However, as soon as she takes the baby back for feeding, she seems to become engulfed in maternal ideology and describes how she started to feel guilty about going out to work. From this position, her change of role has less of an appearance of a positive choice - just one of resignation: "So I gave up and stayed at home".

T: [Addressing both Faith and Martin] So I'd like to go back to what you were saying originally that it was Colin's aggression that you were saying was the worst. What else would you say ... as being problematic?
[Pause. Martin looks at Faith].

F: That was it - just his behaviour and his aggression. Everything was aggression. His demands on you all the time. He had to have you there, be doing with you all the time. And if you didn't, he'd throw a tantrum and then I'd throw a tantrum back. And I was frightened that the only way I could communicate with him was to stand and scream. I shouted one day and scared myself. You know, I shouted at him and he jumped three foot and I jumped three foot. He ran downstairs and I thought, "Oh Christ, is it coming to this?" Every time I talk to him it's going to come to.... Every time I talk to him I shout at him. I did talk to him, I did, but ... he only heard what he wanted to hear.
[Consultants call therapist out for a five minute break to confer.]

The therapist gives up on his attempt to transact with Faith's position as a woman in her own right. Instead he returns to the issue of parenting, and asks the question as if Faith and Martin are equally involved in this and constituted as a joint parenting subjectivity. Martin declines to be part of such a subjectivity and once more sets up Faith to be the family spokeswoman responsible for these matters. However, despite being set up in this way, Faith does not speak from the position of 'mother' - in the sense of taking responsibility for, and defending, the childcare aspect of family subjectivity against Colin's 'protests'. Instead, she abandons her place in family subjectivity and speaks of herself occupying a similar structural position to that of Colin: as a Child, screaming for the recognition of her emotional needs

and frightened at her raw anger when she was not heard. Unfortunately, she was screaming at the wrong person - one who, at his developmental stage, was unable to meet her needs. She is able to express that she did not *want* to 'mother' her child and, due to the lack of personal recognition that she was currently receiving within the family (principally from Martin), she experienced Colin's "demands" for attention as "aggression" - as potentially threatening her ability to have her own basic needs met.

C: [To Faith] Can I play?
F: Can we just talk for a while and then we'll play. Build me another street to show the man.
T: [Reading from notes] My colleagues say that they're glad that you've been able to talk. It's helped them to get a clear picture of what's happening in your family. But they think that Martin knows that you've got a Hell of a lot on your plate and they think there must be more to tell. We're sure that Martin has a lot to add and perhaps we'll have the chance another time to talk about that. But for the moment we appreciate the fact that [Turns to Faith] he is letting you do the talking. That was just something that they wanted to share with you.
F: [Glancing at Martin] Martin is quiet at first.
[To Colin] Now I've said that's enough, thank you.

As we see them after the break, the family have reconstructed their subjectivity, at least temporarily, in accordance with conventional ideology. Faith is now the 'competent mother' keeping Colin in his place, and the 'competent wife' able to speak for her husband in emotional matters ("Martin is quiet at first"). The therapist's intervention is influenced by the Milan approach. He seeks to connote their existing positions in a positive light, while nevertheless bringing out underlying issues where change may need to take place, although change is not actively encouraged at this stage. Thus the therapist hints at certain imbalances between the positions of Faith and

Martin (e.g. "You've got a Hell of a lot on your plate" and "Martin has a lot to add"), while appearing to confirm, or at least not immediately threaten, the existing arrangement ("For the moment we appreciate the fact that he is letting you do the talking").

Although formulated in relation to the concept of system rather than subjectivity, this intervention could have a potentially destabilising effect on the existing arrangement of family subjectivity if, by highlighting the inequalities, it served to energise family members, unhappy with their subordinate positions, to take action to change them. However, systems theory ignores structural imbalances of power, and hence implicitly assumes that all family members are equally empowered to bring about change within an organisation that is seen to reflect consensus and not underlying conflict. Nothing in the intervention explains to Faith why she is actually not in as powerful a position as Martin. This leads to the danger that the intervention simply rubs salt in Faith's wounds - by confirming her distress while ignoring her powerlessness - and thereby leaves her not only feeling distressed, but also feeling personally inadequate that she is unable to change things. Her only potential for support, in challenging Martin's power over her, rests with the therapist (all other pressures tending to reinforce the status quo). However, by the very process of a systemic intervention, the therapist makes himself remote and his position ambiguous, and hence he does not come over as being supportive of Faith. By exposing Faith's powerlessness, but not acknowledging this or supporting her in challenging her position, the therapist's intervention could even serve to harden the existing gendered nature of the family's subjectivity.

T: What I would do would be to recap basically and say that, from what I've gathered, what you are saying is that Colin's aggression was or is the main thing that has been getting you down. That's something that you might have to talk some more about and because of that we thought it may take some time to go through all of that. What I wanted to know from you is whether that is something that you want to do. It might take you a few sessions if that was something that you wanted to do.

F: I don't mind doing it, but what if it doesn't come back again? What if he's good for ever now, as long as I avoid spaghetti, you know what I mean? Because at the time I phoned you, I really did need someone to help me. It was no good just sending him to my Mum's for a day just to get him away. That wasn't it. I needed someone to tell me - well if I was imagining it, [to therapist] d'you know what I mean? Maybe it was me. You know I'm a bit quick - you know - I can only cope with so much at any one time - that's the way I'm made. I was beginning to wonder whether it was me.

Having delivered an intervention which carefully focussed on the imbalances between the positions of Faith and Martin, the therapist backtracks and goes along with the family's construction of Colin as the problem. This has the dual effect of reinforcing the view that the patriarchal organisation of the family subjectivity is unproblematic, and also reopening Faith's subject position as mother, able to speak on behalf of this organisation on childcare matters, but unable to speak her real views and feelings: her sense that she is "on the edge" of a breakdown, and her anger and frustration at being subjected as 'mother' within the current organisation of family subjectivity.

F: Now that he's good, I know it wasn't me.
[Colin climbs on to Martin's knee for a play-fight and a cuddle.]
Now that he's good, I can wake up in the morning really calm. I've adopted a new attitude now that he's given me the chance. When I was trying to before with him, he didn't want to know, but now I've got this new thing with him. I don't care if he's 3½ - if he wants to know something, he can know it. He's capable of thinking really well, but he wasn't doing that before. He was being really selfish. You can't expect him at 3½ to be considerate of me, but there should have been something in it, you know what I mean. It was just the fact that he was deliberately setting out to do it. Now I talk to him and he can be so sensible. You know, the last couple of weeks, he's so sort of.... I don't want a little old man who listens and does everything he's told. I don't want one of them. But he's

> listening, he's understanding, he's been better with me.... When I tell him, "Don't do it, love", he doesn't even say to me, "But why, but why?" What he does now, he helps me with a lot more things and he's not greedy for it now - not greedy for the time to me".

In this discourse, Faith seems to construct Colin more as her idealised partner than as her son: as someone who is more considerate than a 3½ year old, but is not yet an "old man", someone who can think and act on his own account, but is "understanding" and "helps ... with a lot more things", someone who is not "greedy" or demanding. From this position he appears powerful but benevolent: "He's given me the chance" so that "I can wake up in the morning really calm". This idealised partner may represent what Martin is currently not offering her. Projecting her needs on to Colin in this way may have become her only way of expressing them, as she may feel too powerless to ask Martin directly. Colin, in his even weaker power position has little choice whether he accepts the subject position into which he is being projected. It may also seem an attractive position for him as it appears so powerful. In the here-and-now of the session, he seems comfortable to sit on his father's knee, and perhaps identify with his father's position of patriarchal power. This brings him, in somewhat Oedipal fashion, to be simultaneously close to his father and in contest (play-fighting) with him. But this Oedipal contest is far more a reflection of Faith's position of powerlessness than of any desires originating with Colin.

> [Faith continues her theme of expressing her ambivalence about whether there is any need (or any purpose) for the family to come back for a further session, given Colin's apparent behavioural improvements. Colin moves onto Faith's knee, but continues to play with Martin.]

F: [To therapist] You'll be honest with us, will you, at the end of it. I mean, if you find - if we find that we need to come - if I find I need to bring them all back - right - with me, and you find it's me, maybe, will you be honest with us and tell us the truth without

sparing our feelings. Or will you say, "Sorry, it's not Colin", but not go any further, d'you know what I mean?

T: Well, that's quite a difficult question, really. We often don't know how things come about, so it's hard to be able to answer that really.

F: Not "They were..." or whatever. But if you feel, by talking to me, at the end of it, when you assess what I've told you - that's what I'll be honest with you about, because I really want to be told the truth at the end of it, d'you see what I mean? I want to know whether I've been wrong in the way I've handled things and that, and I need to know that you'll be honest with me at the end of it.

T: Well, we do try to be as honest as we can, but as you can appreciate, it's difficult to know.

F: [Interrupting] I know what you mean exactly.

T: Every situation is different, so we wouldn't know what we might be saying to anybody at this stage.

F: [Interrupting] Oh no, not at this stage. I mean, at the end of it all, you'll be honest, as much as you can be. Or at least in the way that you see it.

T: [Interrupting] We wouldn't want to be dishonest....

F: [Interrupting] No, O.K. But I really need to know that if this comes back again, that I've got another opinion - on my side. And I can either look to it and think of it, "There I go again, I'm in the wrong", or I can look at it and say, "We're off again and this is how I'm going to handle it". You see, I know how I want to handle it, but I don't want to - just because I know how to handle it, in myself - it doesn't mean that it's right, d'you know what I mean? Or right for Colin, you see.

T: Those are some of the things we can look at - if you want to explore some of these issues in a fortnight's time.

F: [Interrupting] We'll do it then, yes. [Session ends.]

Faith struggles to ask the therapist to commit himself: is she simply to be blamed (as the mother) for Colin's behaviour, or will he explore deeper issues "without sparing our feelings" and, if so, how far will he go: "Will you say 'Sorry, its not Colin', but not go any further?" Finally, would he commit himself to supporting her position: can she know "that I've got another opinion - on my side"? Her persistence, coupled with her difficulty in asking, suggest both that she had found the therapist potentially supportive (so it was worth raising the issue), but also that his attempts to retain his manoeuvrability meant that she was unsure whether she could rely on his support. Such experiences are an understandable consequence of any systemic approach.

SESSION 2

[At start of session, Colin is playing noisily in the background and Faith is finishing feeding the baby.]

F: We're thinking of moving schools.
T: Yes.
F: Where they should go. [Turns towards Martin] We don't discuss clothes and food and diet or anything. I do all that business.
T: You see to that.
F: I mean, I do say... [Conversation drowned by Colin.] We do discuss things like what's best for Colin, because we were considering sending him to private education - to music lessons - because music seems his strongest point... [Conversation again drowned by Colin.]
T: So do you disagree about that, or do you...
M: Well, occasionally there is disagreement, but usually it is... [Pauses and turns to Faith] I've lost the word.
F: Mutual understanding.
M: Mutual understanding. [Laughs] There aren't any real disagreements as such.
F: We've never had one, have we? We've never had a disagreement. [Pauses and turns to Martin] Martin knows my temper. [Both laugh.] [To therapist] Sorry!
T: No, no. That's good. [...]

Faith starts by presenting how their family subjectivity is currently organised: she is responsible for day-to-day internal decision making, while Martin is involved in those decisions that have a bearing on the external standing of the household. The therapist homes in on whether Faith's use of the term "discuss" implies that there is room for disagreement within this organisation of family subjectivity. As before, it is Martin, as head of the household, who intervenes in order to define the nature of the disagreement, so as not to threaten the unity of family subjectivity. However, this time, he fumbles and has to invite Faith to come forward with the form of words ("mutual understanding") that cover over the possibility of fundamental conflict - conflict that may not be voiced as long as she remains subjugated to his power. This would suggest a little more flexibility in the organisation of family subjectivity (Martin can stumble and Faith can fill in), although ultimately she says what Martin wants her to say.

Nevertheless, this flexibility allows Faith, first of all to parody Martin's statement ("We've never had a disagreement"), and secondly to indicate that although Martin may be in a structural position of power at the levels of activity and ideology, she has the potential to fight back at the level of emotionality ("Martin knows my temper"). Although significant, this does not constitute any real equality: while she has the power to hurt and frighten him if he pushes things too far, this does not mean that he takes her feelings seriously, nor does it give her any equality of participation in transcations at the levels of discourse and activity (such as their discussions on schooling). Thus it may be seen that family subjectivity remains significantly gendered at all transactional levels.

It would seem that, rather than continue to struggle for more equal power within the internal organisation of the family, Faith has opted to work with Martin to enhance the class position of the family subjectivity as a whole. Although her work experience would define her as working class, she is vicariously located within the social formation as part of a family subjectivity whose class position is defined primarily by the economic power of her husband's occupation (a small business), and also by how he may determine that any accumulated wealth is to be consumed or passed on as inheritance. It is the latter domain that is relevant here: decisions about the education of (male) children relate both to defining class position via conspicuous consumption (if bought privately) and to the inheritance of class position (privilege on the basis of educational background). Thus, although Faith stands to gain nothing by such decisions as a person in her own right, she may

hope for some vicarious enhancement of her class position, which however remains conditional on her toeing the line and staying within the bounds of family subjectivity - a price to pay that may actually be greater than any advantage achieved.

F: [Indicating Colin] He has been a bit more spirited since the last time we came, when I told you everything, like.
[Conversation drowned by noise from Colin.]
But otherwise, he's had a few highs - but then I've been at the bad time of the month. But other than that, he's not been too bad.
He's been at my Mum's today, playing with his friend, because he's ben on school holiday - nursery holiday - so he's been there today.

Faith redefines what she had previously termed as Colin's "aggression" as "spirit", as a positive expression of his desiring. She no longer perceives his demands for recognition as threatening the integrity of her own or the family subjectivity. This indicates that she has moved into a more secure power position, both at the scale of her individual subjectivity vis-a-vis that of Colin, and as part of a more secure family subjectivity. However, within the organisation of the family, whereas Colin is now permitted to express his feelings (be "high" or "spirited"), she still disqualifies her feelings as the "bad time of the month" - indicating that she remains significantly disempowered at the level of emotionality. This could lead to a continuation of the process of projection whereby Colin, not only expresses his own strong feelings, but also, by proxy, has to express those of his mother.

T: What do other people in the family think? Why do they think you've come here today? Does anybody know?
F: No.
M: I spoke to Steve and he said...
F: [Interrupting] Did you tell Steve?
M: Yes, I mentioned it to Steve.
T: Who is Steve?
M: Well he's just a business partner, on a small...

F: [Talks to therapist cutting across Martin] You don't smoke, do you? [Therapist declines cigarette.]
M: He's... I... To be quite honest, I don't find anything embarrassing about it. Perhaps she finds it embarrassing, but I don't.
T: Do you?
M: I don't find anything embarrassing about it. In saying that, I think that a lot of people would suggest - or think to themselves - either I'm wrong in the head and I can't cope, or you're admitting that there's something actually wrong with your child. [Shrugs.] Very few things embarrass me anyway as such. You know, everything that happens, I regard as normal, even though it's not normal, if you see what I mean.
F: [To therapist] The Mums at them schools now - you know what I think about some of their kids? In fact, I felt like giving your address to one the other day. I did, honestly. I know what I think about their kids when they do nasty things...
[Faith continues to discuss the other women that use the nursery.]

The therapist's question elicits information about the degree to which their family subjectivity is itself subjected within a wider subjectivity: that of the extended family. As we have seen, it is typically the woman who 'represents' the nuclear family within wider familial networks. In this case, it has been Faith's responsibility to protect the fragility of her family's subjectivity from becoming overwhelmed in the subjectivity of the extended family, by denying them information as to what is actually going on. This line of action is probably against the interests of her own personal subjectivity as she is cutting herself off from any support from her own mother. It is perhaps perhaps because of this that she is so taken aback when she discovers that Martin has secretly breached family subjectivity in order to gain personal support from his business partner.

Martin's action also constitutes a major breach of the previous gender organisation of family subjectivity. Previously, as head of household, he had appeared deliberately uninvolved in matters of childcare, leaving

all responsibility to Faith. Now he has admitted that he was sufficiently concerned to discuss things (and reveal family secrets) to another man. Clearly Faith does not see this as a positive move - one that signals Martin's willingness to become more involved with her on childcare (he had not consulted her) - but as a threat to her one remaining position of power and responsibility within the family .

Martin's admission temporarily displaces him as head of household: it is he who has acted out of line with the patriarchal organisation of family subjectivity. Now seriously wrongfooted, he attempts to regain his position with a show of bravado: an attempt to deny that "anything embarrassing" to family subjectivity had taken place. He has to acknowledge that he had either laid himself open to the charge that "I'm wrong in the head and I can't cope", or the family subjectivity to the charge that "there's something actually wrong with your child", both of which would signify breakdown of some sort. He falls back on his ultimate authority as patriarch to deny the reality of what occurred - to redefine it as "normal, even though it's not normal". However, neither the therapist nor Faith seek to capitalise on his vulnerability and explore any of the contradictions that he is exposing. Instead, Faith moves in to shore up the family subjectivity by distracting the therapist's attention on to the "nasty things" she sees in the way other families operate (and the therapist goes along with this).

[Faith talks about how she disciplines Colin.]
T: When there is something that goes wrong or something that you do, [turns to Faith] like you were just explaining how you put Colin outside the door, do you both come to an agreement about how you'll handle that sort of thing with each other when things like that go wrong?

F: No.
[Faith and Martin start to speak simultaneously. Faith gives in first and attends to Colin instead.]
M: If one is taking care of the matter their way, then you don't jump in.
T: [To Faith and Martin] That's something that you have agreed then?
M: Yes, because, you know, it gets to the point where you're losing charge, sort of thing, so...
T: So how did you arrive at that agreement then?
[Colin places Lego set on Faith's knee.]
F: What's this, I missed it? [Looks suspiciously at Martin.] What agreement's this?
M: [Laughs] D'you want to know which one? [He mimes looking through a set of cards.] I'll have a look.

The therapist does not allow the family subjectivity to slip back into an organisation in which Faith takes over sole responsibility for childcare matters and Martin is able to reconstruct his position of relative distance and unquestioned authority. By asking about how they reach agreement on childcare strategies, he draws Martin in again and also brings to the surface issues of power in the decision making process between them. Before Martin is able to silence her, Faith indicates that they do not actually reach agreement. However, before she can say any more, Martin intervenes and once more takes on the position of "The Name of the Father". From this he restates the principles of patriarchal family organisation, by which, as a parent, "one" should take "care of the matter" by ensuring that "it never gets to the point where you're losing charge". He does not use 'I' to own the authority himself, but speaks it as if it were a self-evident truth guaranteed in accepted ideology. Whereas, in the first session, Faith would fall in with such a restatement of patriarchal control, it is interesting that here she is able to distance herself from having been a willing party to any such "agreement" - although lacking sufficient support in the here-and-now to renegotiate it directly.

F: Well, we do differ a little because Martin's ideas are short, sharp and then - just - smack him, if it sort of deserves a smack. Shout first: warn him. So we always give him - well Martin always gives him - the benefit of the doubt: he's been warned, but only once. Like he's 3½. He knows if he wants a drink. He knows if he's hungry. Therefore he knows what...
[Turns to Colin] Watch! Colin, I don't want this on my lap, son. No, not on my lap, on the floor.

C [Mimics] On your lap. [Moves Lego.]

M No, on the floor!

F: [To therapist] So Martin will say, "Now you've been told. Don't do it again" or "Pick it up" or whatever. If he doesn't pick it up, [indicates striking action with her arm] whack! "Now do what you're told". Me - "Colin, will you do it, will you do it?" You see, I take ages to tell him, and at the very limit I will smack him. But sometimes I will sort of shout at him, you know, "Bloody do it!" When I put on my bad voice - my shouting voice - he does it, half way.

Despite Martin's efforts to silence her, Faith does take the opportunity to articulate the differences between their parenting styles. There seems to be somewhat of a contradiction between her reported inability to assert herself with Colin at home ("I take ages to tell him") and her clear and unconfrontational approach to him in the here-and-now of the session ("I don't want this on my lap, son"), which is demonstrably effective while not intimidating or putting him down in any way. Martin's late intervention ("No, on the floor") is actually unnecessary - the Lego has already been moved - but may indicate the way in which he overrules Faith's more gentle and respectful approach at home. Whereas Martin's power position allows him to slip easily into the Persecutor role position and intimidate Colin, if Faith is unable to assert herself, she tends only to have access to the less powerful Agressor role position (her "bad voice"), from which all she can do is to shout and swear at Colin. In doing so, she has placed herself in a Child position alongside Colin. As this gives her no structural power over him, they have to compromise and he meets her "half way".

F: But it's usually because I don't want to - like tidying up or picking something up for me. But I don't want my little boy to pick my things up, d'you know what I mean? I don't make him do things in the house unless he wants to. But there are certain things that are, like, his duties. He does it at nursery so he should do it at home - cleaning up his bits and pieces, d'you know what I mean? So that I don't have to keep running after him. We've got the little Lego and that goes everywhere. He tips that box on the floor, but he doesn't want to pick it up. [...] And his toybox - a huge toybox - he'll empty it every single day, put his toys on the floor and then run off and do something else. And I'll say, "Clear it up" and he'll say, "No, you do it", and that annoys me. "You do it." I've started him off with, "We'll do it together", you see. [Colin puts Lego back on side table without being asked.] But now I'm trying to show him that, at school, we don't do it together. If we use it, we put it away, d'you see what I mean? We're having a little bit of a battle. Maybe I've done it too often for him, d'you know what I mean? So...

Faith's subjection to patriarchal ideology within the family is reinforced by her own internalisation of gender roles - as embodied in her Parent subject position. From this position she sees it as somehow emasculating for her to ask any man (even her son) to do any of 'her' work, or to clear up even some of his own mess. Effectively, she gives Colin two contradictory Parent messages: "Will you clear it up" and "You're not a man if you clear it up". Faced with the ideological double bind that he will not be respected by his mother if he responds to her wishes, Colin is likely to internalise, as part of his emerging Parent subject position, a conventionally male sexist attitude that "Women will only respect me as a real man if I act abusively towards them." Interestingly, it is their subjection as part of the institutional culture of the day nursery that provides Faith with her only support against her own internalisation of sexism, and Colin the alternative experience of being expected to clear up his own mess (and being respected for doing so).

[Colin attempts to drag Martin away to play with him. Martin resists but does not stop Colin from pestering him.]

T: So you have different ways of doing things - that's what it comes down to in the end.

F: Discipline's different with each of us - like Martin won't sit there and watch me tell him three times, he'll say, "Your mother's told you twice and that's enough".

T: And do you agree with Martin about this way of doing things?

F: He's right I suppose. At the time, I look at it, and to me it doesn't deserve the smack he's been given.
[Colin is still attempting to drag Martin away.]
[To Colin] Colin! We have told you. We are not going to play now. You've been playing all day. Come and sit!
[Colin starts to cry and goes to Martin for comfort. Martin gives him a cuddle.]

C: I don't want to.

F: We - like him, [looks disapprovingly at Martin and then back to the therapist] he'll whack him. But I wasn't on the edge of whacking him, I was on the edge of shouting two or three more times, d'you see what I mean?
[Martin continues to cuddle Colin.]
So - and sometimes that's not hard, like - and then I might comfort him and Martin would say, "Don't do that because you are contradicting me by hugging him". Contradicting him, making it look like, "If Daddy smacks you, Mummy will make it better", d'you see what I mean? Whereas Martin never goes against me when I punish him.
[Colin gets off Martin's knee but still holds on to him.]
So, I'm wrong, d'you see what I mean? He'll never contradict anything I do.
[Colin puts his arms around Martin.]
If I smack Colin, he'll never say, "There was no need for that", but I'll say to him. I shouldn't really, but it's just instinctive if I see him crying. He's got a way of looking at you and making you think, "Oh God, I think it's a shame".
[Colin starts playing with Martin.]
Later on, it may not seem that important to him, but he's got to understand it's important to us, d'you know what I mean?

Throughout the whole of this section there is a dramatic contradiction between what Faith describes as happening at home and what is happening in the here-and-now of the session, at times appearing to constitute an exact reversal of positions. Faith starts by bowing to patriarchal authority and stating that Martin's authoritarian approach is the "right" one, while at the same time restating her misgivings that his approach is unnecessarily violent and punitive. At the cost of

constructing her opinions as inferior and "wrong", she manages to have her 'difference' heard, but without threatening the current organisation of family subjectivity. Although it is "wrong", she describes how she continues to respond to Colin at the level of feelings, even though Martin experiences this as undermining his authority.

However, while Faith is speaking, a total reversal of this process is actually being enacted. In the here-and-now it is Faith who exercises discipline sternly on behalf of the parenting subjectivity "We", and it is Martin who responds to Colin at the level of feelings and thereby could be construed as undermining Faith's authority. Thus, although there continues to be a hard/soft polarisation within the organisation of the parenting subjectivity, Faith and Martin have actually swapped subject positions. This, in turn, has an impact on Colin's position within the organisation of family subjectivity. While Martin occupied the position of head of household, Faith and Colin experienced their oppression separately. They did not form themselves into a common subjectivity, offering each other mutual support against a common oppressor. Due to their difference in both age and gender, they experienced their oppression as separate and unconnected, and, much of the time, identified each other as the target for their anger and resistance. However, when Faith temporarily moves into the position of authority, Martin and Colin are immediately formed into a common subjectivity - a powerful alliance of mutual support based on their common maleness which isolates Faith, particularly at the level of feelings. Thus Faith gains a position of authority, but not one of real power, in this temporary rearrangement of family subjectivity.

It is interesting to speculate on what would have been the outcome if the therapist had invited the family to experience the overt contradiction between the home situation and the here-and-now: for Faith to acknowledge her ability to use authority and for Martin to acknowledge his responsiveness at the level of feelings. By utilising and exploring such contradictions as they emerge, it may be possible to precipitate a real shift in the underlying power relations of a family subjectivity - a 'capturing' of new transactional possibilities within a therapeutic "War of Position" at the scale of the family organisation.

T: So do you give each other ideas then, about things you could do differently, or other things you could do, maybe?

F: I have discussed problems with Martin and Martin's always said, "Do what you feel is best. Try it." So Martin's very good. He knows that I'm with him for the majority of the time in the day. It's me that's having the problem, not Martin, d'you see what I mean? But I feel that the problem's overflowing into the relationship as well, not on Martin's side but on mine. He's not very serious. He never lets anything worry him, [to Martin] do you? D'you see what I mean, he's very happy-go-lucky and that. [Martin nods acknowledgement.] And I'm very concerned about most things. I suppose I'm what people call a worrier. I let things worry me more, where you say, "Oh, tomorrow, tomorrow," you know, "Things will get better". And they always get better for him. Things go right for him all the time. Nothing goes my way.

The therapist's question implicitly redefines Faith's account as if she had been describing a situation in which she and Martin had equal power to influence each other's approaches to discipline (perhaps responding to the shifts taking place in the here-and-now). However, this offers no recognition of Faith's difficulty in having her approach acknowledged and taken seriously by Martin - the fact that she does not "give ideas" to Martin, only the other way around. This leads Faith, for the first time, to disclose that there are problems and imbalances within the partner subjectivity. She is not sufficiently empowered to be able to

tackle this from an Adult subject position. Instead, she lets it out indirectly from a Victim subject position, as if it is entirely her fault for being a hysterical and ineffective mother. Nevertheless, she describes a very clear imbalance in responsibility, with Martin leaving all the "worrying" to her: while he sits back with an attitude of "tomorrow, tomorrow", it is Faith who is left to do whatever is required in order to ensure that things "always get better for him".

She describes a partner subjectivity that is is oppressively organised on gender lines. He would seem to withdraw at the level of feelings (under the organisation of the typically male version of the Be Strong driver) and to project on to her all responsibility for transacting at that level. He knows that he can leave her to do all the "worrying" for their combined subjectivity, since he is 'sitting pretty' in a comfortable position of power, while she is in the typically vulnerable position of a woman who sees the survival of her personal subjectivity as depending on the survival of the relationship. Her subjectivity becomes organised around some combination of perhaps the Please and Try Hard drivers, and these various drivers, acting in complementary ways, effectively define the overall subjectivity of their relationship. Due to the unequal power relations underpinning their different adaptations, it is perhaps no accident that "things go right for him all the time", whereas for her, "nothing goes my way".

T: Things don't always get better for you, you find?
F: No they don't. I find it harder. I've tried doing what he does, which is, sort of, "O.K., let it all flow by. Let everything... It'll come". I've tried it. I've tried it for a couple of weeks. It's a lovely feeling, just to look up and say, [shrugs] "So what." But my personality, in the end, comes... At the end of, say, two

weeks, I think I'm going to... I find myself sitting there because I'm pretending not to care, d'you see what I mean? I've tried it so many times, I can't do it anymore. I can't pretend that things aren't that important. They are. It's things that are really... Martin's right, in a way, not worrying about that, but I do because that's just something that worries me. So...
[Pause. Colin starts grizzling and rubbing his eyes. Martin holds him. There is further discussion of the advice they get from their extended family and then the therapist is called out for consultation.]

Her experiment of trying out his role is an imaginative one. However, because she conceptualises the situation at the scale of her "personality", she fails to realise how she will be forced back into her former role unless Martin shifts his position within the overall subjectivity of their relationship. When she tries out the "happy-go-lucky" role, it does not change her objective power position within the relationship; she does not have the luxury of knowing that there is someone else, who is in a more vulnerable position, who can be left to maintain contact with reality at a feeling level, to "worry" for both of them. It is not surprising that she remained uneasy and unable to relax fully. Because there was no real shift in power, there was no pressure on Martin to take over the vacant role.

T: I'll just read this to you, O.K? My colleagues think that you're a terrific family. [Pause.]
F: Really?
T: They like the fact that you are so open about the differences in your personalities. They think that you both know how to use the differences to the best effect and the result is a good team, with plenty of life about you. Colin is already showing that he is benefiting from what he has got from both of you. You may not realise it, but you have already started a lot of the hard thinking that is involved in bringing up children, and some of the hardest work of all for parents is coming up against your own feelings and memories from when you were a child yourself. You two have between you a whole range of ways of solving problems and you make full use of your thoughts, your instincts and your feelings, so what the team say is that the task for you is to use these ways about whether or not you want to come back - and that's all they want to say.

The intervention addresses issues of conflict from a systemic rather than a critical perspective. Taking the lead from Faith's redefinition of Colin's 'problem' behaviour as "spirited" rather than "aggressive", this is expanded into an overall family theme of "plenty of life". Thus, the "differences" that Faith identified between herself and Martin are linked in with Colin's behaviour, both being connoted in a positive light: "Colin already shows he is benefitting from what he has got from both of you". This theme is used to undermine their collective insertion within a bourgeois ideal subject position of a consistent and conflict-free 'happy family', and to validate an alternative construction of family subjectivity in which internal dissent could be seen as 'healthy'. This possibility is posed in a way that does not threaten the disintegration of family subjectivity: having "differences" is made to be part of being "a good team". Thus, ultimately, the conflict between Faith and Martin is not exposed as the consequence of unequal power relations, but is understood as a debate between apparent equals that is *functional* to the overall family organisation: "You know how to use the differences to the best effect". In this way, the first part of the intervention stays firmly within a systems perspective, although it does challenge a significant aspect of their internalisation of prevailing familial ideology.

The second part of the intervention would not appear to be 'strategic' in any sense, but to relate to an educational or consciousness-raising approach. The invitation to connect their current experience with their particular "feelings and memories" from their respective childhoods could lead on to a better understanding of how they were inducted into

their relative power positions. However, as it stands, this theme is not sufficiently elaborated to be likely to have such an effect, as there is no differentiation between Faith's experience as a girl and Martin's as a boy. Any motivation to look at such issues could also be diminished by their being told what a "terrific family" they are.

Finally, a more explicitly pro-feminist shift in the transactional organisation of family subjectivity is promoted by including, as important in the problem solving process, the levels at which Faith is most competent ("instincts" and "feelings"), alongside that of "thinking" where Martin is dominant. However, the symbiotic gendering of their partner subjectivity is not challenged: it is accepted that they should only have a full transactional repertoire *between* them - with Faith still doing the feeling, and Martin the thinking, for both of them. Until Martin becomes aware of the importance of transacting at the level of feelings (for example, if he had got in touch with how he had responded to Colin's distress in the session), he is still not going to take Faith's instincts and feelings seriously and allow her to be powerful at this level of family transaction.

There would seem to be fundamental difficulties in bringing together systemic and feminist paradigms within the one intervention. In the Milan approach, positive connotation is used as part of a hidden strategy of change: if behaviours can be dissociated from their 'deviant' or 'problem' label within the family's belief system, they will no longer serve to reinforce the existing 'stuck' pattern in the family. Here, the intervention starts off in such a strategic vein,

with phrases such as "You're a terrific family" and "The result is a good team" which are designed to alter the family's belief system such that they no longer define their behaviour as deviant. However, these phrases also gloss over the reality of their breakdown: the instances of 'protest' that subsequently revealed evidence of inequality, distress and oppression in the family. Unfortunately, the lack of directness or honesty in such manoeuvres may well have served to undermine the impact and credibility of the later parts of the intervention which seek, in an entirely straight way, to empower Faith and Martin to take seriously their past and present experience. This highlights the practical (as well as theoretical) contradictions between consciousness-raising and the strategic manoeuvring of systemic approaches.

From a perspective of power relations, it is simply insufficient to redefine their "differences" as something positive - as if this, in itself, would jolt the system into a less oppressive form of organisation. Instead of acknowledging that Martin has the power to intervene and force Faith to define her child-care approach as "wrong", whereas Faith has no power to influence Martin's authoritarianism, the intervention sees the situation in terms of "personalities" and that "you both know how to use the differences to the best effect". It reflects an idealisation, not the reality of the situation. Thus the subsequent opening up of the possibility of conflict within a reconstructed family subjectivity still leaves Faith struggling from a totally unrecognised one-down position, likely to blame her ineffectiveness in influencing Martin on the inadequacy of her "personality" rather than on the structural organisation of the family.

Nevertheless, although her power inequality with respect to Martin has not been acknowledged, the intervention may enable her to use whatever power she has more effectively, no longer being so afraid of destroying the ideal of a 'happy family' if she challenges Martin, and thereby allowing her to experiment with being more assertive.

F: I don't know. I didn't think you were going to say that. I thought you'd say the opposite.
T: Mmm.
F: So we're - I'm - we're normal then. This is normal, is it? D'you see what I mean? So really we haven't got problems, then?
T: We felt you demonstrated a number of different things and you're quite able to sort things out when you come up against problems. [Consultant comes into the room.]
Con: The thing that we really wanted to say is that you're on the right track.
F: We are? [Laughs] Sorry, I've forgotten what I was going to say.
T: So basically it's up to you...
F: [Interrupting] If you don't think we need it, we won't come back again.
T: It's for you to sort out, and if you want to ring in any time...
F: You see, I came in because I thought I had a problem, but if you don't think I - you think it's normal - then I haven't got a problem, have I? [...] But if this is right, the way I'm feeling, the worry - or any of the little things I'm doing - are right, then I haven't got a problem, have I? I needed to know that I hadn't got a problem, d'you see what I mean? [Laughs.]
T: The problem that I've got is that we're going to be turfed out of the building because it gets shut up.
F: [Interrupts, smiling] It's O.K., we've got to go anyway. [Martin laughs. End of session.]

This final section of the interview shows both the power and the limitations of this sort of intervention. At one level we see a dramatic change in Faith's position. In response to the positive connotation of her participation in the partner/parent subjectivity with Martin, she no longer disempowers herself by placing herself in the Victim role position, as the "problem", and instead explores the possibility that she, and they, are "normal". Although they were set the "task" of deciding jointly about coming back, she now decides,

without hesitation or consultation, that "we won't come back again", showing that she is now, without question, the person responsible for the parenting aspect of family subjectivity. Family subjectivity is now reconstructed as a "normal family", one that is allowed to have some degree of internal stress and conflict, but is still very clearly oppressive in its gendering of roles and responsibilities. Its "normal" status means that the family subjectivity is empowered in its external relations (but at the expense of the non-recognition of the oppression within its internal relations). They can now comfortably accept being situated by the therapist as "quite able to sort things out when you come up against problems".

The main impact of the intervention has clearly been to "normal"-ise the family subjectivity so that it can participate unproblematically in existing structures of ideology, emotionality and activity, and has thereby also been to "normal"-ise Faith into the position of mother. From a conventional systems perspective, a positive change would be seen as having taken place with Colin's problem behaviour having reduced and Faith seeming to be in control of him again. The system is once again functional and able to regulate itself. Conventional hierarchies of authority are restored.

From an analysis of subjectivity, a different perspective emerges. The original breakdown, as manifest in Colin's 'problem behaviour', may be seen as a signal of both Faith's and his own distress at their powerlessness and oppression within the patriarchal organisation of their family. At particular moments during the course of the sessions,

this is articulated more directly by Faith, indicating that the process of therapy is altering (albeit temporarily) the construction of family subjectivity, in a way that empowers her to speak (and even to be recognised by Martin). However the intervention that is delivered, and the way that it is delivered, only partially support this process of empowerment. The underlying patriarchal power relations are largely unaddressed and Martin, Faith and Colin remain firmly located within their already existing subject positions.

From a feminist perspective, the gains for Faith, in terms of more permission to argue and to feel her feelings, must be set against her continued imprisonment in the ideologically specified subject position of 'mother', within a 'normalised' family subjectivity that is now more secure against the possibility of change. At least, during the period of family breakdown, she had some opportunity to be heard as a person in her own right. Looked at from the perspective of Colin's empowerment, the effect of the intervention is likely to be broadly positive. Faith's empowerment as a mother, and as a person with feelings and sensibilities, would tend to counteract to some degree the patriarchal strictures of Martin's approach to parenting. In addition, if Faith gains in self-respect, albeit only as a mother, Colin may tend to have less opportunity to express his desire in the distorted image of "The Phallus" and to 'piss' on her (at least until he is much older). This could offer some prospect of more transactions between them based on mutuality. However, until Faith is validated as a person in her own right, the significance of such a change remains severely limited.

11: THE MORTON FAMILY

The Morton family have already been seen by a family therapist six times before being invited by their therapist to be seen by Salvador Minuchin as a one-off consultation. The social position of the Morton family would seem to be 'respectable' working class, with father and eldest son in regular work and no pressing struggle for material survivial. Mary suffered depression following the birth of the children, and Frank had episodes of phobic anxiety. More recently, Chris has been referred to a psychiatrist for psychosomatic stomach pain, and Derek has been seen by the same psychiatrist following a suicide attempt. However, none of the family have been subject to any compulsory State intervention (e.g. mental health admission, criminal proceedings or child protection). The family comprises Frank and Mary, Mary's mother, Gladys, and their three adult children, Lesley (25), Derek (23) and Chris (21).

[The family are introduced to Minuchin as therapist (T)]

T: I will use this hour and a half to try to help you and your therapist to understand what the situation is and, if I can, to help you to change something. But first, I would need to know from you what is going on in the family that you would like to change.

F: Well, due to circumstances over quite a long period of years, we've more or less made wrong decisions, you know.

T: [Laughs] Oh we all do. What were the ones that you did?

F: At the present moment it's a... We're not living right, really.

T: You're not living right?

F: No, it's... [Pause] It basically boils down to now that we'd like mother to have her own place. We've never lived as a family and we've all suffered really, and now it's affecting our family, our children, and that's worrying us deeply.

In this initial presentation of the organisation of family subjectivity, Frank clearly occupies the position of head of household: it is he that the therapist addresses and it is he who responds, not as an individual

family member but as the family spokesman. His personal subjectivity is constructed such that he generally speaks as "We", not as "I", and he is thereby able to include Mary in what he says without her having a voice of her own. The element that is clearly excluded from the organisation represented by "We" is Mary's mother, Gladys - she is clearly the object and not the subject of the discourse. Frank is able to draw upon the modern Western patriarchal definition of the nuclear family as the slot into which their family subjectivity should fit, thereby rendering Gladys' co-residence somehow 'abnormal': "We're not living right... We've never lived as a family" - and citing this as the self-evident reason why "We've all suffered really". This indicates a structuring of family subjectivity in terms both of generation and gender.

T: Your children? Each one of them?
F: Well, first of all it came with Chris, he had three miserable years.
T: Which one of you is Chris? [Frank gestures with his hand.]
M: [Raises head and speaks hesitantly] It was Derek, it wasn't...
F: No, no, Mary, [Wags forefinger; Mary lowers head] can I talk please?
M: Yes, sorry. It's been a long time...
F: No, no. Let me explain, then we'll know what we're doing.
M: Right.
F: You can say your piece as well, O.K? It started, really came to a head...
T: I like what you did just now. It was nice, you know. You want to finish your piece and then you will give space to your wife to do her piece. That was nice, yes.
F: [Smiling] She means a lot to me so that probably accounts for it.

Here we see Mary's first attempt to find a subject position from which she can speak - one that is separate from Frank's all-inclusive "We". She does not speak on behalf of herself, only in the position of 'mother', trying to disagree with her husband as to which of her sons had been most affected by the distress in the family. However, Frank is still in an ideologically sanctioned position which allows him to define

her attempt to speak as rudeness and hence to silence her: "No, no, Mary, can I talk please". As the man, he is privileged to set the parameters of the subsequent discourse ("Let me explain, then we'll know what we're doing"), before he offers her the opportunity to speak: "You can say your piece as well, O.K?" He is thereby able to determine the conversation into which her contribution may be inserted, and the subject positions that are available to her within that. The therapist intervenes, not to challenge this domination, but to reinforce it. He uses his power position as a 'professional' man to validate Frank's control of Mary's right to speak. Within this man-to-man discourse, Frank's apparent 'fairness' in allowing Mary to speak at all becomes defined as a token of his regard for her : "She means a lot to me".

F: But mainly it seemed to come to a head, I suppose, when Chris started to have a lot of stomach trouble, and he spent nearly three miserable years trying to get this...
T: [Interrupting] How old are you, Chris?
C: 21.
T: 21. Um hm.
F: He spent three years with a very good doctor at [ ]. He treated him, and his symptoms, as genuine, with many, many tests. They proved negative, and then it was suggested by [ ] that he saw [ ] the psychiatrist at [ ] hospital.
T: [To Chris] You are now working with the psychiatrist?
[Mary raises her head and looks at Chris.]
C: No, it's entirely up to me whether I see him again and I said I probably would. About six months ago, he said if I want to come back, it's up to me. If I do go back after the six months period, that will be in about two weeks, but I doubt that I probably will.
[...]
T: That's very good, O.K. [To Frank] Carry on.
F: [Mary has lowered her head] And then in this period that Chris was seeing [ ], unfortunately Derek had problems that came to a head - that had been with him, through our living conditions, for many years, and they came to a head and unfortunately he...

Although Frank is given an absolute right to finish speaking when it is Mary who wants to speak, as soon he starts to speak for Chris, he is

interrupted by the therapist and Chris is given the right to speak for himself. In this way, the therapist encourages certain changes in the power relations of the family subjectivity but not others. The 21 year old son is enabled to speak as an adult in his own right because it is considered 'functional' that he should begin to act independently at this stage of the family life-cycle. However, it is clearly not seen as necessary or appropriate to establish Mary's independence as a woman in her own right - instead she is required to take second place after her husband. Nevertheless, this intervention in support of Chris does serve to disrupt Frank's smothering control of the whole family subjectivity: his right to speak for everyone. This offers Mary the possibility that, at some point, she too might have an opportunity to participate in her own right. It seems significant that she responds by raising her head at this point, only to drop it back down when the therapist passes control back to Frank.

T: [Interrupting] May I ask Derek? I will come to you, but since you mentioned Derek's problems, I would like him to describe it to me.
F: Yes, all right then.
T: [To Derek] Please. [...]
D: I don't know what to say really.
T: Uh huh. You'd prefer your father to talk about what he thinks are your problems? Or will you prefer your mother to talk about what she thinks are your problems? Or your grandmother to talk about what she thinks are your problems? Or Lesley? [...] Or would you like to say what you think are your problems? It's perfectly O.K. with me. [Pause.] Who do you select to talk about you? [...]
D: My Mum or Dad.
T: Which one? Select one.
D: My Dad.
T: That will be the best one?
D: That's what I think.
T: O.K. fine. [...]

Whereas the therapist interrupted Frank when he attempted to speak for Chris, he asks Frank's permission before speaking directly to Derek. In

defering in this way, he places Frank in a position of authority over Derek. When Derek finds himself unable or unwilling to talk, he is not offered any right of silence, or any support in speaking for himself. Instead, the therapist reinforces his disempowerment by suggesting that he choose someone speak for him. Although Derek mentions the option of Mum as well as Dad, as Mum has already been silenced by the combined patriarchal power of Frank and the therapist, he has little choice but to put his father back into the position of family spokesman: he thus finds himself manoeuvred into a subject position where he has actively to disempower himself and reinforce his father's control.

T: [To Frank] What are his problems, since he gave you permission to talk about them?
F: Never a settled home life. I mean, his mother's been very ill for a long while and there's been disturbances between my wife and myself, arguing about things that we could really have sorted out.
T: What kind or things? Can you be concrete about Derek's problems so that I can understand them. [...]
F: He's frightened of making mistakes. He's frightened that people might talk about him, about his - probably a simple little thing that nobody else would notice.
T: Like what?
F: Well, he's been... He's just started on to another section - in his job where he's working - and down there they play cards - you know, most factories or places of employment do this sort of thing - and he's worried about doing it wrong, and he feels that they're probably talking about him or probably laughing about him. [...]

The way that Frank finally describes Derek's problem is actually in terms of exaggerated personality adaptations, ones which seem to be on the verge of causing a breakdown of his subjectivity that would jeopardise his participation in his workplace. On the one hand, he would appear to organise his subjectivity according to the Be Perfect driver ("He's frightened of making mistakes"), while, on the other, he displays a paranoid outlook which, as we saw earlier, may reflect a Be

In Control driver that has become exaggerated to the point of breakdown ("He feels that they're probably talking about him or probably laughing at him"). These adaptations may relate to the positions that had previously existed for him within the organisation of a family subjectivity that, we learn, was dominated by his mother's long-term "illness" (i.e. depression) and by "disturbances" between his parents. They may also reflect his parents' own adaptations and expectations. On the evidence of the session so far, Frank's continual drive to speak for (and hence control the communications of) his family would indicate that his subjectivity too is organised according to the Be In Control driver.

T: Let me find out from Derek. Derek, is your father doing a good job in describing your problems, or isn't he? Because I would like you to enter if your father is not doing a perfect job. [Derek nods agreement.] He can continue, he is doing a good job up to now? [Derek nods.] O.K, pay attention, because maybe you will need to remind him of some of the problems that he is not telling, O.K?

D: Yes. [...]

F: If conditions had been a lot better for him, he would have done a lot better. And it really fetches us up to the present day, it's really brought out all his problems, and it now centres on our home life and, you know, you reach a position now where mother would be better off in her own home.

T: O.K, that means that you had come to the conclusion - or, at least you, Frank, [to Mary] I'm talking with Frank, not with you, O.K?

M: [Looking up] Yes, I...

T: You'd come to the conclusion that, if your mother-in-law would have her own home, then your life situation and the problems of Derek and the problems of Chris will - and I don't know if you have problems, Lesley, or not - you will be able to solve.

F: Yes, I think...

T: [Interrupting] O.K, very good. [To Gladys] Your name is...

G: Gladys.

[Interruption in background as Derek raises a point with Frank.]

F: [To therapist] Derek's afraid that you're saying...

D: [Interrupting] I'm not afraid, I'm saying that...

T: [Interrupting] Do you want to talk directly with me?

D: I'm saying that... [mumbles] ... somewhere else, well, basically, then all my problems would go, but I don't know, that's not...

T: You don't think so. [...] I'm so glad that you have contributed your point of view that I think is very important. You see, sometimes your father knows what you think, but sometimes he doesn't, you know.

The male domination of the interview continues. When Mary tries to enter the discourse, she is immediately silenced by the therapist: "I'm talking only with Frank, not with you, O.K?" However, the therapist allows his conversation with Gladys to be interrupted as soon as they have started. The therapist's interventions subtly alter the power relations between Frank and Derek: on the one hand he still asks Frank's permission before turning to Derek ("Let me find out from Derek"), while, on the other, he permits Derek to comment on his father's performance if he "is not doing a perfect job", thus placing him in a position of power over his father. This, and the suggestion that there might be certain issues about which Frank is "not telling", opens up the possibility of open difference or conflict between them. Although Frank tries to 'play safe' by shifting the focus back on to Mary's mother (who is doubly vulnerable due to both her gender and her generation), such a disagreement emerges. Derek moves into the position set up for him by the therapist of disputing how accurately Frank is actually able to speak for him - and whether Frank may have been using his position as spokesman to project his own concerns as if they were those of Derek. However, there is still no room within the organisation of family subjectivity for overt conflict between Frank and Derek as individuals in their own right - only between Derek and Frank-speaking-for-Derek.

T: Let's see if your Mum can answer something. Will you allow her to talk about you as well?
D: Yes.
T: It's O.K. [To Mary] Your name is Josephine?
F: Yes.
M: Yes, [Looks to Frank for confirmation] but I'm usually called Mary, though. I don't really use the name Josephine.
T: What shall I call you?
M: Mary.

T: Mary, I see how helpful your family is, especially how helpful your husband is, because I just asked you your name and he gave me your name and then he also gave me your nickname. That is very lovely and very nice, but let me ask you, because I am a stranger, do you really need reminding about what your name is, do you really need Frank's help about that? [Pause. Frank laughs in embarrassment.]

M: No.

T: Isn't that wonderful how families are? You know, when families are so helpful as your family is, sometimes they are over-helpful. Like in this moment, for instance, in which Frank was doing something you didn't need to. When Frank is over-helpful, do you tell him that you do not need that amount of help? [Pause.]

M: No, because I don't think that he's really... I don't think that he is over-helpful with me. [...] I never really used the name Josephine - it never seemed to be my name. I prefer the name Mary.

At long last, Mary is invited to speak. However, her subject position in the discourse has already been set for her. She is to speak as "Mum" and she is to talk about her son's problems, provided that he gives her permission to do so. However, Frank seems to be so driven in to Be In Control (as family spokesman) that he intercepts the therapist's first question ("Your name is Josephine?") and answers it for her. This is a dramatic indication of the extent to which Mary is not even allowed to be in control over her own identity within the current (and previous) organisation of family subjectivity ("Josephine ... never seemed to be my name"). The therapist intervenes to confront this process, but in a way that does not empower Mary. The main force of his sarcasm is directed against Mary for not standing up for herself ("Do you really need reminding what your name is?"). Due to her already reinforced powerlessness within the family organisation, this does not spark her off into some outburst of angry self-assertion. Instead, she meekly agrees with the therapist and ends up actually trying to protect her husband from any criticism that he might be "over-helpful", in doing so maintaining herself in the Victim position as someone who must be so 'inadequate' as to need "help" of this sort.

T: O.K, Mary - let me call you Mary - how do you see the problems in your family?

M: Well, I suppose I'm in two different minds. It's a simple solution now seems - which I should have done ten years ago when we did a kind of a split up with the family, I didn't really want us to live together - I would have preferred Mum to have had her own place and us to have our own place, but I didn't think it could be done, so I suppose we lived - I lived - in a way that I didn't really want to and I suppose that would have had an effect on the family that I've only just realised. [...] This that we've been thinking of doing, this splitting up, would help Derek, would help us all, wouldn't it? And also it's what we want - we want for us and Mum - we want to have our own place and live differently to what we've been doing, instead of keeping in this one way that we've got into, and that would help all of us a lot. [Pause.]

When Mary speaks, it is to slot into the subject ('I') position of the discourse that Frank has already set up for her in which it is already defined what "we want for us and Mum". While she expresses the required "simple solution", she hints that her personal view would be more complex and conflicting: "I suppose I'm in two different minds". What she does allude to is that she did not want her mother to be part of their family in the first place, but was powerless to do anything different at the time. It seems that she was unable to construct the domestic aspect of the family subjectivity in the ideologically prescribed manner - as a separate unit that was clearly her responsibility: "I would have preferred ... us to have our own place, but I didn't think it could be done".

M: But then there comes the problem - I don't know where they both meet - but I used to have this problem right from when they were babies. I had this kind of feeling - I didn't know what it was - but it used to mess up our lives - arguing - and now I can't... To me it's called depression. And not only did I find it hard to live - and find a reason for living - but it was hard to have to get up and look after three children, and I know I was probably messing up their lives at the same time. And I think Derek's a bit inclined that way. He's had that problem from when he was small - so he wants that cleared up - but this other problem will help clear it up as well, which is what we want before it is too late. We want to sort it out and have our own place and Mum have her own little

place, and we'll be closer in a better way than we've been. There's the two things, isn't there? There's what I call this depression feeling and there's this sorting out of the living - which seems, now we've started to do something about it, it seems fairly simple if we can find a place. But it was so hard, it felt - I felt guilty in trying to split us up or trying to arrange separate living - I didn't think anything could be done. So there's the two [looks at Frank] and I suppose that each kept the other going.

F: Yes.

M: The depression feeling that I've lost now and the living problem which we had right from when we were married. But I didn't like living on top of each other then, and we've sorted out a little bit but not properly, and now, although it is a little bit late in Mum's life, I think it's still best to do it.

F: I quite agree. [...]

Mary is able to negotiate a subjectivity for herself that comprises not just the subject position that Frank had prepared for her, but also some opportunity for her to speak in her own right about her experience of breakdown. She connects this with her inability (for whatever reason) to establish her family as a separate unit: "the living problem which we had right from when we were married". The tension between ideology and material reality may have left Mary blaming herself for not having a 'proper' family. It may also have been difficult for her to establish any sort of viable position for herself within the organisation of the household, probably having to defer, in different ways, to the authority of both husband and Mum (simultaneously being pressured to "arrange separate living" and feeling "guilty" about this). It is only recently that she would seem to have been able to start to renegotiate the organisation of family subjectivity, and their respective positions within that: "We've sorted out a little bit but not properly".

Her experience of "depression" was initially manifested in her "arguing" with her husband. This suggests that, at this stage, she was able to articulate some of her dissatisfaction and anger - feelings that would

make sense, given the above analysis of her situation (although she would seem to have been unable to make the connection at the time). However, she seems to have been unable to renegotiate family subjectivity so as to resolve her dissatisfaction: she was finding "it hard to live - and find a reason for living". It would seem that Mary's personality adaptations, in common with many women, were to Please Others and to Keep Quiet (suppressing her her own feelings in order to look after others). Under stress, her tendency would be to escalate these adaptations in the vain hope that this would lead to her being accepted and looked after. However, there is no indication that she received any meaningful support from either her husband or her mother.

This exaggeration of her adaptations may be seen to define the form of her breakdown: the 'shutting down' of her own desiring and activity (in order to Keep Quiet and Please Others) became manifested in her "depression" and suicidal tendencies. Nevertheless, there was an element of 'protest' (albeit a very polite one) in that she found herself unable to construct herself, any more, as the ever willing mother: "It was hard to have to get up and look after three children, and I know I was probably messing up their lives at the same time". Cut off in this way, it seems that Mary identified some form of alliance with the young Derek - posibly on the basis of projecting similar qualities and experience on to him (a projection that he may have had little choice but to accept given his relative powerlessness and dependency as an infant): "I think Derek's a bit inclined that way. He's had that problem from when he was small".

T: Lesley, now you know I have a need to understand and to hear the voice of each of you people here. You know, I am a little bit puzzled and I need your help. Do you think that the problem that Chris had with his stomach, the problem that Derek has with his... [To Derek] You are not a very confident kind of person? [Derek nods agreement.] The sense that people are looking at him - will be solved by this change?
L: Um. [Pause.] I think it will help Derek, like, but I don't think it will completely solve it because it will take a long time.
T: What do you think? Everybody, I think, is very concerned for everybody else in this family, so I'm sure you've been concerned about Derek, so what do you think about Derek's problems?
L: He gets very worried.

In not responding to Mary's account of her distress, the therapist not only dismisses her as a significant speaker in her own right, but also closes off her attempt to open up transaction at the level of feelings. Although superficially more respectful to Lesley, he subjects her within a similarly conventionally feminine subject position - one from which she cannot speak in her own right, but only express her concern for male members of the family.

T: He gets very worried. What else?
L: Like, if he wants something, he wants it exactly right and, if it's not, if it's a tiny bit wrong, that worries him as well. I think he wants things exactly how he sees them in his mind, so if they're not like it...
T: Oh my goodness! [Lesley laughs.] Tell me something. How does that affect you, because people that want things to be perfect can be a pain in the neck to other people.
L: [Smiling] Yes. He loses his temper... He loses his temper quickly and, I suppose, a bit unpleasant when he does. [...]
T: In what way is he unpleasant?
L: Well, we argue - not so much now because I suppose I understand a little bit what's wrong with him and how he feels - but we used to argue a lot.
T: Yes. Can you give me an example of in what ways he can become a pain in the neck [turns to Chris] or a pain in your stomach, or wherever it is that you are a pain. [All laugh, including Derek.]
L: Mostly it's about what he eats. He seems to me to be very fussy and I think, "I'm eating this all right, so why is he making such a fuss and sort of making extra work for Mum?"
T: Is he very much of a fussy eater?
L: Yes. [...]
T: So, he is a little bit of a controller of other people?
L: Um. I don't know. I don't think so, really, because...

Up until now, no-one in the family has been able to express anger openly when it concerns real issues such as oppression, injustice or personal hurt. Instead, we have seen how Mary was unable to resolve her anger at her situation within the family, and ended up turning it in on herself as depression. Similarly, Chris may be internalising his anger as psychosomatic stomach pain (the family situation being, metaphorically, a "pain in the stomach" to him). The only expressions of anger that are permitted above the family's transactional horizon arise out of secondary issues: issues to do with the driver-adaptations that each family member had taken on. Thus, Derek can be violently angry if he is "worried" that something is done "a tiny bit wrong", but cannot be directly angry with his father over more serious issues. His 'protest' remains within the context of the escalating impact of his Be Perfect driver-adaptation: he has become such a "fussy" child that this threatens the breakdown of not just of his personal subjectivity, but that of the whole family. Although his 'protest' is evidently self-destructive and infantilising, it nevertheless has the effect of dominating the current organisation of the family.

Set against this overall pattern, we see in this section, an instance in which Lesley speaks out clearly against the oppression of her Mum by Derek: "Why is he making such a fuss and ... extra work for Mum?". It is probably not coincidental that this transaction of recognition (and the consequent potential for power together) took place between women. It is also no surprise that this potential for empowerment and change is ignored or passed over in the therapist's continued focus on the power positions of male members of the family.

T: [Interrupting] You said he controlled your Mum in his demands that she should prepare him special kinds of food. Am I right?
L: In that way. But I don't think he controls what I eat or things like that.
T: You mean he doesn't control you?
L: I don't think so.
T: Thank God he doesn't control you. Who besides Mum, who else does he control with his demands for perfection?
L: Um.
T: Is your Dad also a sucker for it or only your Mum?
L: In a way, because I think it worries him a bit that he's not eating what Dad thinks he should be eating, or he's not eating enough, or Dad thinks it's not enough.
T: That means that your Dad is concerned about his thinness and about his not eating, and your Mum is concerned as well.
L: Yes.
T: O.K, so both of them, when you go to the dinner table, both of them are eating and looking at him?
L: Um. [Frank nods agreement.] [...]

Here we see the substitute battleground upon which Derek and Frank have their indirect confrontation. Instead of a conventionally constructed 'man-to-man' contest between father and son, based on their respective bases of 'power over' one another (physical strength, property ownership, aggressiveness, etc.), we see Frank trying to exercise meticulous control over his son's eating habits, not from a position of patriarchal dominance, but from the less powerful (and conventionally feminine) position of an over-protective Rescuer. Derek's 'protest' behaviour keeps him ever more stuck in a Rebellious Child position. Thus the conflict that is actually taking place is between two people in relatively disempowered positions, both responding to stress by escalating their respective Be In Control adaptations. However, both these men are still situated in relatively powerful positions with respect to Mary. She is caught in a desperate attempt to accommodate herself to the conflicting demands (however ineffective) of the two men. She acts as the mutual object of their struggle for control, taking on whatever "extra work" is required of her without question. Her lack of

any real resistance may be seen to be determined by the disabling conjuction of her already existing personality adaptation and the ideological position to which she is assigned as the woman of the house.

T: Chris, is he a pain in the neck for you? [Chris laughs.] In what way... Because I know these people that want perfection in certain things, and they can have a very different world, but the life of people around them can be very tough also. How does he demand that you should be? [...] I'm wondering if sometimes you feel like kicking him. Do you sometimes feel, "Stop it!"
C: That's what I was going to say about controlling people, because he does, in a way, dictate how you react to things or the way you treat him and, where other people would probably lose their temper, you don't. You sit there and you just sort of let it go.
T: You're 21. At 21, people should lose their temper. Why don't you?
C: You do. I have, a couple of times.
T: And what happened?
C: Well no, I used to lose it, but now, more often that not, I don't say anything.
T: You've stopped your ability to lose your temper.
C: No, I haven't stopped it, you suppress it.
T: You suppress it.
C: You don't do it for the sake of keeping things quiet. For the sake of it's not going to make anything better if you start having a go.
T: Are you certain?
C: [Smiles] It's a lot nicer, then. [...]
T: Who is the biggest peacemaker in this family, Lesley? Can you nominate somebody?
L: Mum, I think.
T: Your Mum, yes, Chris, would you agree with that?
C: Yes. One thing that I talked about when I was seeing Dr. [ ] was that he thought that I thought I was, if you see what I mean. And I was considering - being considerate here and there, and making sure that people don't argue, and doing this and not doing that to the right people. But actually physically doing things - probably not.

The therapist invites Chris into a significantly different subject position to that previously occupied by Lesley - one that reinforces a clear gender difference between them. Whereas Lesley was just asked about the "unpleasant" way in which she is "affected" by Derek's "temper", Chris is invited to go further and is told that, as a 21 year old *boy*, he "should" lose his "temper" with Derek. However, he owns the fact that he normally tends to go out of his way to be "considerate" of

others, and to placate them if they become argumentative - indicating that he, like his mother, has come to organise his subjectivity according to a Please Others driver. In childhood, he may have been (covertly) invited to take on this adaptation as a way of relieving his mother of some of her sense of burden and duty as the family was growing up (and she was breaking down).

T: Is Dad sometimes able to create some kind of aliveness - can he get upset?
C: Sorry?
T: Can Dad get upset and kind of...
C: Can Dad? Yes.
T: He is the one that can get upset easier?
C: What, out of Mum and Dad?
T: Between...
C: Between Mum and Dad? Dad gets upset quicker.
T: Thank God. [To Frank] That means that you get upset and angry with Derek when he becomes a pain?
F: It gets too much.
T: And you would like to say to him, "For crying out loud..." [To Derek] How old are you?
D: 23.
T: "You are 23. Don't act like you're 15".
F: That is the point. You've hit the nail on the head. That's what Derek's got to be taught, that he's a man. He ain't a boy no more.
T: And you do that.
F: Yes. In a sense. No. In a sense. You try to get on that line.
T: So soft. [To Mary] They are so soft, my goodness. [...]

The therapist turns the focus back on to Frank by asking Chris whether his father can be "alive" or "upset" (i.e. express anger) in the ideologically specified way for the man of the house. He then seeks to manoeuvre Frank into the required position, feeding him a suitable put down line to use against Derek: "For crying out loud ... don't act like you're 15". Frank recognises that this fits perfectly with his internalisation of what is required by patriarchal ideology ("You've hit the nail on the head"), but he remains unable to insert himself into the required subject position and speak the words himself.

Furhtermore, when Frank agrees that "Derek's got to be taught, that he's a man", he exposes his own failure to induct Derek into the position of 'man' within the relations of patriarchy. The passive construction of the sentence indicates that, even with the therapist's manly support, Frank is still not sufficiently confident in his own potency as a man to be able to do the teaching himself - his tentative "Yes" becomes a "No", he can only "try to get on that line". The therapist ends up seeking the support of Mary, on the basis of her internalisation of patriarchal ideology, in ridiculing the lack of masculine 'hardness" displayed by Frank and his sons: "They are so soft, my goodness".

It is thus emerging that the organisation of Frank's personal subjectivity is such that he has great difficulty in being angry directly with other family members (suggesting a driver-adaptation to Please Others). This places the family in a situation of internal contradiction. If the family is to insert itself in to the required slot within patriarchal ideology, Frank must take on the position of expressing the righteous (Persecutor) anger that is conventionally associated with the position of domination of the household head. However, given the way in which his past experience may have shaped his personal subjectivity, he seems to be profoundly uncomfortable with this, prefering instead to exercise control in a more indirect (but potentially smothering) fashion as the family Rescuer, the one who always speaks and acts on others' behalf.

This leaves the family in a position of uneasy stalemate. No-one seems willing to challenge or be angry with Frank directly - perhaps for fear

that he would not be able to stand up to this, thereby bringing about the collapse of the (ideologically required) image of patriarchal domination. In order for the family to remain acceptable within external discourses, they would seem to have organised themselves so as to collude with the *image* of Frank as having unquestioned patriarchal authority. This has resulted in the whole family subjectivity becoming organised on the same basis as Frank's own subjectivity: no real anger may be expressed above their collective transactional horizon. Thus their emotionality comes to be suppressed, not directly by the man of the house, but by the very existence of that position within prevailing ideology. Their collective self-distortion is made more complex by the fact that Frank is such a tenuous occupant of that position.

T: We will come back to you [indicates Derek] and what you are doing to your family, and what your family is doing to you, because you are in a vicious circle and you are doing things to your family that you should not accept. You know, he's a tyrant.
F: You get an exchange of silly little words like, you know, and that sort of...
T: [Interrupting] I think Derek is a tyrant.
F: He wants to be someone...
T: [Interrupting] I think he controls you.
D: I don't understand any of this.
T: Of course you don't understand.
D: Why am I a tyrant?
T: You are a tyrant. You control his behaviour [indicates Chris], you control her behaviour [indicates Lesley], you certainly control your Mum - she is a sucker for you - and your Dad that would like to say to you, "Oh for crying out loud, grow up" gets afraid in the middle of a phrase and stops it. If that's not a tyrant, I don't know what is. [Pause.] He's a very controlling man. [...]

The way in which the therapist confronts Derek's power contains two contradictory perspectives. On the one hand, he acknowledges that Derek appears stuck (and effectively powerless) within a "vicious circle" of reciprocal family interaction: "What you are doing to your

family and what your family is doing to you". On the other, he suggests that Derek is, in fact, occupying the (vacant) position of patriarchal power within the family: that of "a tyrant ... a very controlling man". The apparent assumption is that, given the conventional organisation of family subjectivity, someone must be occupying this position: if Frank "gets afraid" in the middle of laying in to his son, then it must be his son who is the real "tyrant". No other form of organisation is seen as possible or permissable. In reality, however, Derek is as unable as his father to transact from such a position: far from telling the therapist to shut up (or some similar tyrant-like statement) he is still transacting from a rather bewildered Child position: "I don't understand any of this". Frank is also manifestly failing to construct himself as the necessary tyrant and is reverting to an almost childlike complaining: "You get an exchange of silly little words." In the here and now of the session, it is actually the therapist who ressurects the vacant position of patriarchal power within their discourse and uses it to overrule both Frank and Derek; it is he who is modelling to them how to be a tyrant within a patriarchal social order.

T: [To Lesley] Are you able to move out - do you have a boyfriend?
L: Um. [...]
T: You don't bring your boyfriend home.
L: No.
T: That's very good, I congratulate you. [Shakes Lesley's hand.] That's very very good. That's life for you out of the home. Great, it must be very very difficult to create a corner out of the home - your family is so close.
L: Yes, I never used to go out. [...]
T: What about you, Chris - are you able to create a world away from home? [...]
C: I dunno, I feel horrible about it sometimes, and it probably sounds horrible, but it's not meant to be done in a nasty or horrible sort of way, but a lot of the time, I feel that I enjoy it a lot more being somewhere else than at home, and I don't find it difficult at all to get on with other people's families. [...]

T: What happened to Derek - that is a person that prefers that other people talk for him - [to Chris] so I will ask you to think for Derek. Is Derek able to leave home?
C: No.
T: No, he's stuck at home. [...]
C: He used to go out up until a little while - until a couple of years ago I didn't really realise there was anything particularly worrying really - he used to go out with his mates and everything. [...]
T: [To Lesley] Do you think that boys would accept Derek if he comes with the silly kind of things that he comes - that your Mum accepts and that your Dad accepts - do you think boys of his age would accept things like that?
L: I suppose not, if he is exactly the same outside as he is at home. [The therapist asks Lesley and Chris how old Derek appears to be and concludes that he is "a very confused tyrant" who "jumps from 6 to 75", acting either as a selfish child or as a grandparent who tries to take care of his own parents.]

The therapist explores with both Lesley and Chris the extent to which they are able to construct themselves within other subjectivities outside the home. Just to have such choices is empowering in itself, and even more so if this permits them to construct their personal subjectivities within different contexts, in ways that allow more self-expression, mutual contact and support. Chris seems to find it positively liberating to subject himself within the organisation of other families: "I don't find it difficult at all to get on with other people's families". By contrast, we may see clearly how Derek's influence in the family does not equate with personal empowerment: his control is contingent on his remaining locked into subject positions within the family organisation that give him no access to Adult choices (and opportunities for recognition) outside the home: he is now unable to "go out with his mates and everything".

T: [To Frank] Do you have anything that you do where you and Marie...
F: [Interrupting] Mary. M.A.R.Y. Mary.
T: Mary. M.A.R.Y. Ah, thank you. You see, Mary, how helpful is your family. Do you do some things with Frank, Mary? Can you go out? Can you go to the movies, or do you go bowling, or - I don't know what kind of things British families do?

M: Well, um... We're together a lot during the day, because Frank works evenings and nights. We go shopping - we go round the shops a lot. We're together a lot. We don't especially go out to the pictures and that. Frank enjoys his golf, so we've got no problems that way.
T: Do you play golf also?
M: No. [laughs.]
T: So he enjoys his golf alone.
M: Yes he's a good er... plays golf well. He enjoys it. It's a part of our life, kind of thing, although I don't go with him.

The therapist enquires about how Mary and Frank are organised as a partner subjectivity (we have previously only seen how they are organised as a parenting subjectivity). By (deliberately) mistaking Mary's name, he provokes yet another demonstration of Frank's suffocating domination of the relationship - it still seems to be he who is in control of his wife's name. However, even though it is a relationship in which she hardly figures, it seems to fall to Mary to speak about it on their behalf, indicating a gendering of the partner subjectivity in which it is her duty, as the woman, to maintain and uphold it. Although they go shopping together, there seems to be little opportunity within the organisation of their partner subjectivity for any satisfying contact between them, or for Mary to enjoy herself in her own right. Instead, the emotional inequality of the relationship is demonstrated by the fact that her only satisfaction seems to come vicariously from knowing that Frank is enjoying himself, but *on his own*: "Frank enjoys his golf, so we've got no problems that way... It's a part of our life, kind of thing, although I don't go with him".

T: Ah. What about young, old man Derek there - is he a companion for you?
M: No, no.
T: No.
M: No, he's just - he's our son, he's not a companion for me.
T: A son can be a companion; a son can not be a companion. A son can talk with you.

M: Oh, yes, we can talk together all right, but this er - being concerned and worrying business - he's had it from a baby. We knew it was wrong then, but didn't know how to sort it out. It always, right from as soon as he could - as a toddler, he has always had this worrying business and...
T: He was very close to you. [Pause.]
M: Well, perhaps the way I was, made him... I dunno, because he used to... I had a job to get him to school and I knew that was wrong.
T: You what? I didn't hear you.
M: Perhaps I caused him to be that way, but I knew it was wrong that it was a job to get him to school or to - he used to back out of everything which, you know, I didn't like him doing. Perhaps, in a way, I tried to force - with Lesley, I tried to force her to - I tried to send her to Sunday School when she was very tiny because I wanted her to mix with people. I was probably wrong doing that. But Derek was a worrier right from the start. [...]

Having uncovered Mary's lack of support and recognition within the construction of her partner subjectivity with Frank, the therapist probes to see if she might also be subjected within an 'unofficial' partnership with Derek. Mary rejects this: "He's not a companion to me". Instead, their relationship is characterised not by mutuality ("liking"), but as a reversal of a parent-and-child subjectivity, with Derek taking on the position of "concern" and "worrying". This configuration would seem to have been longstanding - from around the time of her breakdown - but contravened the ideological blueprint of how the family should be organised: "We knew it was wrong then". It seems clear that, within the organisation of the family, both Lesley and Derek were inducted into the position of 'caring' for Mary at home, but at the same time, Mary was subjected within ideological and legal discourses that dictated that they should be separated from her. This placed both her and the children in a contradictory situation. On the one hand it felt "wrong" that the children should seem to want to stay at home with her (Derek began to be blamed for his "worrying business"), while on the other, it felt "wrong" to force Lesley to go to Sunday School.

C: I mean, the only reason that Derek gets away with it is because we've known it's Derek, and what is happening there at the time isn't really Derek, and the only reason he gets away with it...
T: [Raising hand to stop Chris] That's impressive.
D: [To Chris] Get away with what?
C: The fact that you probably are annoying me, and I'm not doing anything or telling you to shut up. [Pause.]
D: How's that again?
C: If at any time you're annoying me and you're keeping on annoying me, and I don't say anything and I don't tell you to shut up.
D: By doing what?
C: Anything. If we're sitting down having our dinner and you're going on and on about the same bit of bread and I don't tell you to shut up. The only reason that you'd get away with that, and probably someone at work wouldn't - say it was happening at work - you'd turn round and say, "What the Hell are you going on about? I mean it's a piece of bread for Christ's sake".
T: [In background] So nice.
D: Well, you do things that annoy me such as...
C: Well, you know, fair enough. [Derek mumbles.] You see, the thing is, I reckon I could quite easily tell you to shut up a damn sight more than I do.
T: You know something, Chris, Derek is annoyed now, but he is stopping himself because he doesn't know what to do with that. Just now, you gave him a piece of your mind and I was enjoying that. [Chris laughs.] I think that's lovely. You see, why should a young man like you get kind of stop yourself being normal and natural, just because he is saying to you... He's manipulating you, saying you need to accommodate to me. Everybody had to accommodate to Derek. Everybody. It is a strange family. You all had accommodated to Derek and that's not helping you a bit, because you have a strange kind of world around you, Derek, a strange world.
[The therapist continues to encourage Chris and Lesley to confront Derek as a "person", not a "sick character", but they reveal their fear of doing so, following his suicide attempt a year previously.]

Chris now moves into the subject position that the therapist has been preparing for him from which he can transact with his brother on the basis of mutuality. He seems to have received sufficient recognition from the therapist for him to abandon his drive to Please, and is able to express his thoughts and feelings on his own behalf. By contrast, Derek is stuck in a position where, as Chris says, he "isn't really Derek". As the therapist points out, Derek is also angry, "but he is stopping himself because he does not know what to do with that". By the same process by which Derek has control within the family organisation,

he is also silenced from the open expression of his feelings. He is part of constructing, and is simultaneously constructed by, the "strange kind of world" that is his family's subjectivity. In the way in which they have organised themselves in response to his "manipulating" them, they have established a transactional horizon which has prevented them from expressing themselves in relation to any real issues, or offering him any recognition except in relation to the roles that he has performed. Thus the restrictive organisations of personal and family subjectivities come to mirror one another. Hence, when his subjectivity reached the point of personal breakdown (in the form of suicidal behaviour), their collective adaptation also became exaggerated to the point of breakdown - a breakdown that led to their eventual referral for family therapy.

T: Frank, why do you accept that he should demand so much of your wife's time?

F: Because you don't want to upset the atmosphere. In a sense, we all know what Derek's done, so we're all afraid that we might tip him over the edge and he'll try something again, and, in a sense... [He turns to Mary who tries to get a word in.] Listen, the way you run around and get a special this and a special that, and, if we haven't got it, we nip in the car and go down the road and we get it, especially for Derek. I shouldn't stand for that. That's what I get angry about at times. He has what is put in front of him. [Mary tries to protest.] If he don't like it, he leaves it. If the bread is one inch thick and it's a slope on it, is that another problem? No, that's all right: the two slices of bread finish up the same near enough, and the second one he cuts himself, but that's all right. That is what is the trouble.
[Both Mary and Derek try to interrupt.]

T: No, no. Frank, continue talking. Don't let him interrupt. You are talking to your wife and what you are saying is important.

F: You see that, personally, I shouldn't allow them things to happen. Derek should tell you... He shouldn't get you into a flat spin whether you've got the right or the wrong stuff. If it's good enough for me to eat - and you do good food, we live well - it must be good enough for Derek. But he demands different variations of spaghetti bolognaise. We had something the other night that I didn't like at all.

D: Yes, so you see... [Mary also tries to say something.]

T: Don't let him interrupt you.
F: Which I didn't like at all, but we eat it.
D: I didn't ask for that.
T: Don't let him interrupt.

The implication of the therapist's opening question is that it is Frank that should be in control of his wife's time (not Mary herself): it is to him that the question is directed. Here we see a return to the earlier configuration in which the men in the family battle for control over the woman-as-object. Despite being aided and abetted by the male therapist, Frank struggles to perform as the man of the house and is aware of falling short of what is required of him ("I shouldn't allow them things to happen"). He starts off as Rescuer ("You don't want to upset the atmosphere") and finishes up more as a squabbling Child ("We had something last night that I didn't like at all"). Whether the topic is the use of her time or what she should cook for dinner, Mary does not exist as a speaking subject in this discourse (she just has to do the work). While the therapist intervenes to support Frank, it is always, "Don't let *him* interrupt you" as if Mary's attempts to speak do not even deserve a mention. It can just be assumed that Frank will be able to overrule her. However, this competitive discourse between the men is so accepted within patriarchal ideology that the therapist gets away with describing it as "talking with your wife".

F: [Talking down to Mary, very slowly and deliberately] Really, what we are saying is that I agree we are more or less putting Derek in cotton wool, and instead of saying to him...
M: [Interrupting] I don't think so.
D: Hang on.
F: [Raising voice] Why don't you tell him to stop getting you running around for different foods?
D: Well, you do the same.
F: [Ignoring Derek] Is it getting too much for you, Mary?
[Mary tries to answer. Frank continues in a hectoring tone] I'll ask you now, is it getting too much for you?

M: [Flustered] Well, it is beginning to, because...
F: [Interrupting] Well, that's because of, like, what's being explained to us.
M: Up until a year ago, he was coming in every night - everything I had for dinner was, whatever I had, was wrong. But I knew that was carrying on before he'd started to attend the hospital. Well, since then, he doesn't eat ordinary food like we do. He has a banana and brown bread and that kind of stuff. He doesn't eat the food we're eating. He doesn't have a meal like we do.
F: Seeing as we're being open about this, Mary, I think that you'll agree that every night that Derek comes in there's a fault with the food. Would I be right, [raises voice] am I right in saying that there is a fault with the food?
M: Yes, I know. [Faltering] I've said that, that is right.
F: It's wrong, innit? [Raises voice] How can he come in every meal time and say, "What's that again?" or...
M: [Pleading tone] How's Derek going to get out of it, then? What's going to happen?
F: [Gesticulates with hand] He's got to accept what's here.

Frank still seems unable to take on Derek from the position of the man of the house. Instead, he can only transact in this way in relation to Mary, who will more willingly subjugate herself to his authority. He is able to displace his anger on to her from the position of Persecutor, intimidating her into taking on Derek on his behalf ("Why don't you tell him to stop getting you running around?"). Frank does not allow Mary the space within the discourse to explain whether it is Derek's behaviour, or his own hectoring, that is "getting too much" for her. Nevertheless, under this pressure, she breaks with her symbiotic alliance with Derek - no longer rescuing him in return for his attempts to "worry" about her. However, when she does confront Derek's behaviour, she still remains locked within her mothering role. She does not allow herself to express anger at being messed about, so much as hurt that he does not like the "ordinary food" that she provides.

F: [Patronising tone] Like is being said, you cannot dominate people. If it's wrong, then say, "I don't think that's very nice" or whatever. Explain yourself differently [Mary tries to speak] so that thing the other night, instead of it being pushed on you...

D: [Trying to interrupt] Everybody else...
F: [Ignoring Derek] Say I come in, eh, and I don't like what's on the table...
D: [Interrupting] That's what I was trying to say.
F: [To Mary, ignoring Derek] Where are you going to finish up?
D: The other night, everybody else liked it except you.
T: [Stands up, walks over and shakes Frank's hand] Stop, I want to congratulate you, you just did some...
F: I'm not proud of anything. [Turns on Derek and wags finger] But I want a word with that boy and he knows it.
T: But I tell you what you've just done. Hold on a minute and I will tell you what you did just now.
[Kneels down in front of Mary] Can I tell you what Frank did just now that is very, very important? He was having a discussion with you. It was a discussion of husband and wife.
M: Um.
T: And a discussion of husband and wife needs to be respected by grown up children. [Gestures to Derek] And this man that is a grown up, but also sometimes very young, feels he has the right to interfere in conversations between husband and wife. [Turns to Frank] And you didn't let him and I thought that was good. [Derek tries to interrupt.] That was very good. Because, you see, Derek started the session saying that you should talk for him. He first gives you the right to talk for him and then he insists he has the right to intervene when you don't want him. So I think you did a very nice boundary here and I like it. That gives me some kind of hope that, in this family, maybe you can help this man to become older because he is, in many ways, still six, seven, eight, nine years old, a demanding spoiled child. [To Mary and Frank in turn] It's true you've spoiled him and you spoiled him. He's still spoiled and he thinks that his needs are more important than your needs.

The battle for position between Frank and Derek continues. Frank is only able to maintain his position of authority by transacting through Mary. He seems unaware of the irony of telling Mary that "you cannot dominate people" (referring to Derek), while he is actually flaunting his domination of her. The difference between them lies not in what they are actually doing, but in its ideological legitimation: whereas it is 'natural' for Frank to dominate Mary, it is problematic when Derek competes with this. Whenever Derek points out that he is only imitating his father's behaviour, this bid for equal power (over Mary) can be disregarded by Frank - as long as he is supported by the therapist. When Derek actually does manage to speak a complete sentence ("The other

night everybody else liked it except you"), the therapist intervenes using the power of his physical presence to silence him. Encouraged by this demonstration of patriarchal domination, Frank momentarily takes on the position of "man" in the family and uses his anger to put down Derek as a mere "boy" who is subject to his authority: "I want a word with that boy and he knows it".

With this change of position, the therapist freezes the action and seeks to build on this restructuring of family subjectivity. He emphasises the appearance of Frank's new-found power by kneeling down before him. He consolidates Frank's position of domination within the parenting subjectivity by informing Mary that Frank's harangue constituted a normal "discussion between husband and wife", and informing the rest of the family that this "needs to be respected by grown up children". He redefines Derek's attempts to imitate his father's domination as being "spoiled". He ridicules the suggestion that Derek "thinks that his needs are more important than your needs", implying that, by definition, Frank must have the right to have his needs met before those of his son (Mary's needs having been discounted all along).

T: The question is, can you help your wife to free herself from Derek, so Derek will become free to grow up.
F: [Quiet and serious] Yes, I will help her. [...]
[Therapist gets up and returns to seat.]
T: Talk with Mary about what you can do to help her to free herself from Derek's demands, so that she treats Derek like a son, but like a 23 year old son.
F: [To Mary] You've got to expect what any mother would expect, and that is respect. Unless you get respect, and keep bowing down, then he will continue to be what he is.
[The therapist invites Lesley and Gladys to swap seats so that Lesley is now on one side of Mary and Frank is on the other.]
He will continue to carry on like this, because there is no way you should bow down and prepare food for him, O.K?

[The therapist asks Chris and Derek to swap seats so that Chris now sits next to Frank.]
That is very good, do these things for him, but you are a person, you are his mother, and he's got to respect and treat you like his mother. [...]

The therapist's question constructs Mary as a (female) parasite impeding Derek's growth into a man. It is her maternal clinginess that is now to be blamed for Derek's failure to be "free". The suggestion that it is Frank's duty to "help" his wife make the separation, indicates that the corollary for Mary of being made "free" of Derek is that she will become further subjugated within the partner subjectivity. Frank responds by lecturing her on how she should be treated with "respect" as "a person" by Derek, while at the same time patronising her and denying her any opportunity to speak in her own right (showing her the very antithesis of respect). While Frank is speaking, the therapist rearranges the family such that those who are most likely to undermine Frank's control over Mary (Derek and Gladys) are moved away from her, and replaced by the therapist's 'allies' in the restructuring process (Lesley and Chris). This leaves Mary more and more vulnerable to being shut off and engulfed within the organisation of the partner subjectivity, in which her only available transactional position is to be submissive to Frank.

T: Let Mary answer. Now, go ahead, Mary. And I want you, Chris and Lesley, to listen and to intervene, because all four of you need to do something that will help your brother grow up. He operates in some way as if he is stuck at the age of nine. He needs to grow up. [To Derek] Your Mum is in some way still holding you, she's still holding you tight to her apron strings. And I want you, Mary, to talk with Frank, but I would you two also - four adults. [To Derek] I want you to listen, because... [Derek tries to interrupt] No, after, after.
D: I want to say it now. You're saying, Dad, you're worried that I'm going to do something. Well, all of these years, I have been worried that Mum is going to do something.
F: I know, that's what we're saying.
T: O.K, very good. That's beautiful.

D: [To Frank] And the other night, when we had that food, I didn't ask for whatever it was, that stuff that Mum made, but everyone else liked it except you. And you said, "Don't do that any more".
F: That's the position you've got...
M: [Sounding apologetic] It wasn't...
T: [Interrupting] Oh, no, no, no. [Moves to stand over Derek and touches him on the shoulder] Listen, at this moment you are 23. In just this moment you were 23. But most of the time you are younger. [...]

Although nominally giving Mary the right to speak, the therapist sets up the discourse in such a way that she finds that she has no voice of her own. First of all he constrains her by instructing his two 'allies' to act as her 'minders', "to listen and to intervene" in her speech to ensure that she does not stray from what she is supposed to say. He then goes on to define the parameters of her discourse: rather than offering her an opportunity to speak in her own right, she has to talk about "something that will help" Derek "to grow up". At the same time, she herself is defined as the problem: it is she that is seen to be holding him "tight to her apron strings". It is not possible for her to speak of her oppression at the hands of Frank or Derek as they compete for power over her; instead she is held responsible for Derek's failure to become a man-tyrant rather than a boy-manipulator. Faced with all this, it is not surprising that she is in fact unable to speak at all.

With Mary now defined as the problem, Derek temporarily reverts to his position of 'carer' to describe how it had been her suicide bid that had hooked him into a symbiotic relationship with her in the first place. Although congruent with the therapist's blaming of Mary, this utterance sidesteps the therapist's attempt to restructure the family subjectivity on conventional lines, with Frank as the 'man' having authority over Derek as the 'boy'. From the still vacant position of 'carer', Derek is

able to wield sufficient power to withstand Frank's attempt, backed up by the therapist, to hush him up and reconstruct his meaning ("I know, that's what we're saying"). He then challenges Frank directly for the position of head-of-the-household, tackling him for acting from the child-tyrant position himself in relation to Mary's food preparation. This attack sufficiently resembles "manly" behaviour for the therapist to go over and acknowledge him as a 23 year old, on the verge of fighting (over women) like a man (although the therapist still emphasises his greater power by standing over him).

T: I like that you are growing up, and when you said that you need to stay at home because you are worried that your Mum will commit suicide, that's not your job, that's the job of your father - and that probably has kept you young for too long a time. Chris can trust your father that your father will help your Mum. Your sister trusts your father that your father will help your Mum. You don't trust your father that he will do the job.
C: The reason...
T: You feel that you need to look if your Mum will do something.
M: Yes, that goes back to when Derek was young. I used to... I used to have this horrible look on my face because there was this kind of heaviness and nobody - I couldn't make any - it used to upset the family life because nobody...
[The therapist moves from Derek to stand opposite Mary.]
I couldn't put it into words and my husband couldn't make out what was wrong with me, and he thought I was against him, and...
T: [Interrupting] Mary, these are some issues for your husband to be helpful to you.
M: Yes he is, now.
T: But it's not his job?
M: It wasn't then, it wasn't. You see, Frank couldn't - it used to cause rows between us - Frank couldn't understand it was something in me, and not anything wrong with him, that was causing this feeling. And I think Derek was aware of it and he couldn't go to school and leave me. And I knew that was wrong, but I didn't know what to do about it. [...]

Despite the therapist's attempts to silence her and contain her discourse within the privacy of the partner subjectivity, Mary reveals the reason why Frank could not be trusted to "do the job" of caring for

her. Not only had he failed to offer her any positive recognition, but, within the organisation of the partner subjectivity, he had redefined any expression of her distress as blaming him (Victim role), thereby inviting her to feel guilty and attend to *his* feelings of hurt at the expense of suppressing her own (Rescuer role). Losing contact with (and unable to articulate) her own feelings, and lacking any real personal support, she could only signify her distress through her "horrible look". The oppressive force of her personality adaptations (Please and Keep Quiet), linking in with the expectations of patriarchal ideology, lead her to deny that this "look" could express feelings towards anyone: it was just "something in me".

T: [To Frank] And the question is, your wife needs your help, because unless you spend some time with her [sits down] helping her how to separate from your son, she will not know how to. Can you teach her to play golf, or is she too poor at that?
F: Very poor.
M: Um...
C: You've never tried.
M: I'd like to. [Reaches out and holds Frank's hand.]
T: That's beautiful. He never tried, eh?
C: He never tried to do anything.
M: I'd like to say that Frank helps me as - he's completely with me now, when years ago he wasn't, and I think that was when Derek started to try and...
T: [Interrupting] We all know that. [...]

The therapist goes back to Frank to help Mary with her 'problem' of separation as "she will not know how to". By setting it up in this way, he invites Frank to patronise her rather than work on an equal basis on renegotiating their partnership. It is almost a foregone conclusion that she will turn out to be "too poor" at golf. Interestingly, it is Chris who confronts Frank that he "never tried to do anything" with Mary. It is also interesting that, despite the put-down, Mary's initial

response is so positive, taking the initiative of reaching out for Frank's hand. However this progress is dashed by her overpowering drive to Please and to placate; immediately, she has to rush to Frank's defence against the criticism from Chris and say how "completely" helpful Frank is to her now. From a tentative move to renegotiate the partner subjectivity on the basis of some mutuality (playing golf together), she allows the relationship to fall back into a complex of patronage and Rescuing, neither allowing the other to stand up for themselves, but with Frank in a position of overall power (he can still go on rejecting the possibility of their playing golf together).

T: But in general, you see, I think that the issue about should your Mum have another house or a flat or something - it's some issues that you will resolve. These are issues of families, these are not psychiatric issues. [To Derek] But what you do to your parents, and what your family does with you, that is a psychiatric issue, because you are caught and you are their gaoler. You demand that they behave with you in ways that are not normal for them. And they are your gaolers because they treat you in ways that you are remaining concerned with silly, shitty things - things of a very small child - so they are controlling you also. I don't know how you will free yourself, man, I really don't know, because I am impressed that you don't think with your head: you ask your father to explain, you ask your brother to explain.

D: No.

T: Oh, yes, don't tell me that. This is your chance. You're very childish.

D: No, I said that...

T: [Interrupting] No, no, no, you can defend yourself, but it's crap.

D: Will you let me say it? I said before we came up here, I said I couldn't see the point, because I talk to Dr. [ ] about it, right? So I didn't want to talk to - about the things I think. I didn't want to talk to it - about it all in here. And then you said, "Nominate someone" - you told me to do it.

T: So I was manipulating you?

D: Yes, because if I didn't nominate no-one to talk about it, then who's going to talk about it? Are we going to sit here quiet, or what? Because I don't want to come here and talk about it.

T: I think you are extremely clever.

D: Why?

T: You're childish, but clever. [...]

The therapist constructs the issue of whether or not Gladys remains co-resident as one which does not affect the organisation of family subjectivity in any fundamental way: it is an internal matter "that you will resolve". By contrast, he constructs Derek's inter-relationships with the rest of the family as "psychiatric" - as so pathological to the functioning of family subjectivity that they become external issues that necessitate outside intervention. Thus he makes it appear that the breakdown of family subjectivity is located, not with Gladys's position in the organisation (as was previously construed by Frank), but with that of Derek. The therapist's description is careful to locate the breakdown, not at the scale of Derek's personal pathology, but at the scale of family relationships: "You are their gaoler ... and they are your gaolers". He presents the reality that while Derek may be controlling and influential in the family, it is at the expense of being stuck in a position of personal disempowerment, one that offers few options or choices in ways of transacting: "I don't know how you will free yourself". Perhaps in response to the real recognition that he has received, Derek seems to be sufficiently empowered to try to express himself directly: "Will you let me say it?" Although ultimately out-manoeuvring him, the therapist nevertheless allows Derek to make his point, and acknowledges that *he* might be a "manipulator" as well.

T: [To Chris] You're younger, aren't you?
C: Um, yes.
T: But he demands that you should protect him. [...] When you disagree with him, do you feel free to tell him?
C: No.
T: Why not?
C: Because I don't want to cause him any more aggravation than he's already got.
T: [Stands up] Because he had managed to organise you into being his protector, like he managed to organise Mum to cut the piece of bread

in the right way, because he had managed to have his father stop himself instead of saying, "Mary, my dear wife, let's begin to deal with our son as if he is a normal 23 year old". So I will leave you now. Before I leave - because I think you have enough of what I can tell you - what I can tell you is that, unless you change, he will not change, [Indicates Lesley, Mary, Frank and Chris] unless you change. I am not including you, Mum, because I did not talk with you, because I felt that your issues in the family are family issues and you will resolve them.

F: Yes.

T: Like you will resolve also, when you have regard to the fact that your son is 23.

The therapist initially focuses on Chris as the family member who had earlier been willing to take Derek on 'man-to-man' - who had modelled to Frank the subject position which he should, in conventional ideology, be occupying. In his summing up, rather than foster the illusion that Frank is actually transacting from this position, the therapist chooses to challenge Frank's inability to exert patriarchal control over his son. Finally he insists that Frank and Mary, as the parenting subjectivity, and Lesley and Chris as their 'minders', must transact with Derek as if he is "a normal 23 year old". In this way, family subjectivity would also be reconstructed so that it appeared "normal" to the outside world, with each family member transacting from subject positions that fitted in with the specific expectations of capitalist patriarchal ideology for a person of their age and gender.

M: When you talk about manipulating, arranging things, Derek can't seem to get into a way of life - he can't seem to let things take their course, things like Christmas and holidays, he thinks they have to be arranged rather than let things take their course. How can he...

T: [Interrupting] You know something, Mary, I don't mind when he organises his life fully. The question is, he organises your life, why do you accept that he should organise your life, why do you cut the piece of bread? [Pause.]

M: Well, he complains about the piece of bread.

T: Oh, no, no, no, Mary, how old is he?

M: 23.

D: And she cuts bread for Chris, Lesley, Dad, anyone.

M: He cuts it himself again if he's not satisfied with the piece I've cut. He cuts it himself, another piece.
T: Now, what he says is that you really treat everybody else like they are younger than they are.
M: No.
T: No. You treat Frank as if he is your husband and an adult person.
M: More now I do. I never used to so much. Now I do.
T: You can stand with him and you are the same size. [...]

Having said that he is leaving, the therapist does not go, and it is clear that the intervention that he delivered did not have sufficient resonance with the immediate organisation of family subjectivity to jolt them into a "normal" pattern of interaction. Rather than rise to the challenge, Frank remains silent. In the resulting discursive vacuum, in which 'normal' ideology is failing to operate, it is those who have earilier been denied access to speaking positions who come forward. Mary attempts to redefine "manipulating" as "arranging", and describes Derek's fear of spontaneity (an aspect of his Be Perfect and Be In Control adaptations), and how this affects family life. Derek comments on how Mary constructs herself as the servant of the whole family (and not just him): "She cuts bread for Chris, Lesley, Dad, anyone".

Even such a momentary empowerment of Mary and Derek undermines the hiererchy of authority that the therapist has been seeking to establish. He ignores the gender basis of Mary's oppression and her lack of choice as "Mum" within the family organisation, and instead blames her for treating "everybody else like they are younger than they are". This raises the anomalous position of Frank who, as a man, also expects to be waited upon. Even though such 'infantile' and demanding behaviour can reflects a typical subject position within masculine subjectivity, Mary is able to exploit the contradiction between this and patriarchal

expectations of 'manhood'. She indicates that there was a time when she was not able to treat Frank as an adult - not only having to serve him, but (presumably) having to look after him in some sense. If this had been the case when she was feeling depressed, it is likely that she found Frank unsupportive, not because he was occupying a position of patriarchal dominance, but rather due to his acting as another demanding 'boy' for her to look after.

T: I hope, Chris, that you begin to treat your brother as if he is older than you, instead of as if he is younger than you. It's not your business to be his protector.
C: That's the thing, you see, in this family. [...] As soon as literally any words fly, or anything anywhere, I go somewhere else. I leave because I just feel sort of - stick it, it's not my problem.
D: Well, sometimes I think it is your problem and I think you're walking out on it. [Mary tries to intervene.] When you leave things lying about, like, and I'll say about it, then you'll say something and just go storming off, which you shouldn't do.
C: Yes, but I...
T: He storms off your way. [...] He can't be natural with you. [...]

The therapist sets up another dispute between Derek and Chris, but this time it is Derek who is 'natural' and expresses anger and resentment directly: "I think it is your problem and you are walking out on it". This suggests a real shift in the here-and-now organisation of his personal subjectivity, and in the organisation of their relationship (first or all, neither could express anger, then it was only Chris). The fact that, for the first time, Mary tries to interrupt Derek while he is speaking, suggests that Derek's shift of position has also had an impact on her position within the organisation of family subjectivity.

M: If you don't mind me just saying...
T: [Interrupting] Mary.
M: I don't understand why he is stuck at the age...
T: [Interrupting] Oh, so you think he is nine years old, yes? [...] Frank, your wife has her heart too - she has a big heart and she is

stuck with little children. I think that you need to take over a larger part of her heart. She needs to be more concerned with you and [gestures to each child in turn] less concerned with him and less concerned with her and less concerned with him. Can you do that?

F: Yes.

T: Can you make yourself attractive? [Frank laughs.]

M: I've changed from that, haven't I, Frank, I'm not like that. I used to be like that - that was what was wrong. I'm not like that now.

F: That side, I'll agree. But the side that Dr. Minuchin is talking about is quite right. I said to you just now and you've forgotten. He's got to learn to respect you regarding your arrangements with food. You're not to run around looking for him and getting it right for him. [Therapist shakes hands and says goodbye to everyone in turn except Frank and Mary.] If he suggests something that you would like for a meal or he would like for a meal, get it for him, but not to be unduly criticised until you're snowed under. [Therapist interrupts Frank to shake hands.]

M: You'll have told him that himself - to talk to me differently. [Therapist interrupts Mary to shake hands and then he leaves.]

The therapist discounts Mary's desire to make progress at the level of understanding. He puts her down within the context of patriarchal stereotyping as a typically emotional woman who is "stuck" because of her "big heart" which, it is presumed, excludes any ability to reason. Furthermore this boundless emotionality is constructed as being up for grabs - it may be given to the children or to Frank, but it does not seem to be in any way under Mary's own control. She does not seem to have the choice of who she actually desires in any active sense. As mother and as wife, she is simply obliged to have her "big heart" used up by children and husband: it is for Frank to push the children away and take it for himself if he so chooses. As the therapist is preparing to leave, Frank is demonstrating his new-found control as he instructs Mary on how to deal with Derek. However, Mary is able to slip in the proviso - that, if they are to operate according to a patriarchal 'blueprint', Frank must now be 'man' enough to deal with Derek directly: "You'll have told him that himself - to talk to me differently".

If we reflect back on the session, it is striking how the therapist's interventions are directed at some power relations but not others. He would clearly see it as dysfunctional for a father to be unable to stand up to his son, but as quite acceptable for a woman to be so subordinated to the wishes of her husband and children that she ceases to have any life of her own. His interventions serve to reinsert the family into the slot that is prescribed by patriarchal capitalist ideology: a set of male wage earners being serviced by the domestic labour and emotional support of a woman. The positions of Gladys and Lesley are peripheral to this - they can leave or stay part of the household without disturbing the basic organisation of the family subjectivity.

This raises wider issues about therapeutic outcome from a perspective of power relations: what is the value of enabling a family to function more effectively as a unit, if this is at the expense of (further) disempowering those family members who are experiencing the most oppression? In this instance, the probability is that the family subjectivity will have been sufficiently reconstructed along conventional lines for all of them (with the probable exception of Mary) to be able to participate coherently once again within a 'normal' range of external transactions (holding down jobs, making relationships with boys/girls, not having to see psychiatrists, etc.). However, they will be doing so in exactly the same ways as before, and hence be just as vulnerable to oppresion and exploitation within these transactions as they were previously - they have not been empowered to deal with the world in any more assertive ways, nor have they been linked in to any networks of mutual support, either inside or outside the family.

There would seem to have been little enhancement of opportunities for mutual support and recognition within the family organisation. On the contrary, the family's participation in external transactions as a fully functioning subjectivity would seem to be at the expense of the reimposition of internal patterns of oppression and domination, structured on the basis of gender and generation. It would seem significant that the only instance of potentially empowering support within the family took place between women (Lesley speaking out against the way her mother was being abused by Derek), and that this was ignored within the patriarchally dominated discourse of the therapy. Given that Mary's oppression has not been dealt with in any way, there would seem to be a strong possibility that her subjectivity may break down again - leading once again to the possible breakdown of the family subjectivity and various forms of 'protest' by other family members.

If the process of therapy had concentrated on empowering those suffering the greatest oppression, this might also have had been empowering for the family as a collective subjectivity. Instead of being reconstituted so as just to conform to the available patriarchal 'blueprint', their subjectivity as a whole might perhaps have been reorganised so that, collectively, they could support each other in pushing to the limits what could be possible within the prevailing structures of the social formation. Positive experience of renegotiating subject positions within the family could provide a basis for similar struggles outside. Not only might Mary have got as far as the Golf Club - but she might then have felt sufficiently supported by her family to demand a change of club rules in order for her to become a member in her own right!

12: THE WATKINS FAMILY

This is an analysis of exerpts from a longer piece of work, undertaken over seven sessions. The family comprises Angela, Dave and their children Tracey (aged 6), Matthew (aged 4½) and Linda (aged 2). There had been two home visits by the therapist before Angela and Dave agreed to attend for a family therapy appointment to discuss their request for Matthew to be received into the care of the Social Services Department. The therapist is a female social worker and the work is observed by female colleagues acting as consultants. In the final session, the therapist is joined by a male student as co-worker.

SESSION 1

[The therapist starts by enquiring about the family's experience of reception into Social Services care.]

T: So in your generation and your parents' generation - no experience of Care. How about your own children? [To Angela] Do I remember that once you went into hospital?

A: Yes, they went into Care then. I don't really know about that much because, of course, me being in hospital because I took an overdose. Dave being at work and nobody looked after him on my side. Well, my side wasn't really asked. But on his side, nobody would look after them. They'd look after one but not the other one - because of Matthew being premature, you see. And Dave said no way did he want them split up, so a social worker came round and she took them into Care, to a foster home.

T: So you, Dave, were the one that had the experience of talking to social workers about Care. Can you remember what the process was then - what happened? Did you phone up the Social Services and say, "Can you help me?" or how did it all come about?

A: It was in the hospital, because you get social workers in the hospital.

D: She came out the following day and said, "I hear you've had a bit of trouble and you've got no-one to look after the kids, and I'm going to sort it out for you - find a foster home". I said, "I don't want them split up - they've got to be together". So we went down to the Clinic, filled the forms in, had them checked over and put over to this place - went into care for a bit.

On this earlier occasion, an action that constituted a breakdown at the scale of Angela's individual subjectivity - her taking a serious overdose - also precipitated a major breakdown in family subjectivity. It would seem that Dave saw it as more important to hold on to his economic power base as a wage-earner, than to hold together the family subjectivity. Nevertheless, he retained some control of family organisation, in that it was he who decided that the children had "got to be together", and hence retain some of the structure of their family unit. It was also he who prevented them becoming absorbed into Angela's extended family (and perhaps thereby sliding out from his control). However, in delegating to the social worker the task of sorting out who would provide care for the children, he subjected the family organisation within the discourses of the State childcare apparatus.

It is already emerging that the Watkins family has been even less successful than the Morton or the Hirst families in inserting their overall subjectivity into the bourgeois image of self-containment and responsibility. Their family is barely formed as a subjectivity in its own right. It is not fully differentiated from those of their respective families of origin - both Angela and Dave speak as if they still belong to their respective "sides" as much as they are constrained by their membership of their own family subjectivity. Similarly, they have drifted in and out of being subjected within the discourses of State apparatuses. As will emerge more later, their membership of these overlapping subjectivities has often seemed vital to their economic and emotional survival, but, in turn, has had a determining effect on how they construct their individual and joint subjectivities. Their ongoing

experience of powerlessness points to their occupying a significantly different class position to the Hirst and Morton families, being located more within what Rapp describes as the "hard living" working class.

T: When they went into Care, was there any sort of agreement about how long they were going in for? Were any complications anticipated?
D: Just a little bit longer than I agreed to - until Angela got back on to her feet.
A: They wanted us to have Tracey but [Turns to Dave] they reckoned that we used to neglect Matthew, didn't they? They said we couldn't have Matthew and I said, "If I don't have one of them back, I'll just come down and take him back". Because they wouldn't let me see him so much because I was tempted to take - you know - I used to upset them because I used to try and take them - you know - they were mine and that's it. She used to say that I let Matthew sleep too long, but a premature child always sleeps a lot, and, if a child is asleep, I don't intend waking the child up. And she used to say that I let him sleep too much and it was my fault that he wasn't crawling the way he was. When he went to this foster parent, he started crawling and things like that, and I said that's got nothing to do with it at all.

In giving over responsibility to the Social Services Department, Dave effectively lost control of the family subjectivity. By opening up the inner workings of their family to outside scrutiny, the parenting subjectivity as a whole became vulnerable to the collective charge of "neglect" within a State controlled discourse of 'acceptable parenting'. This discourse subjected Angela within a double bind: the more she tried to fit herself back in to the position of 'mother' (attempting to reassert control over the childcare aspect of the family subjectivity by demanding to take back the two children), the more she became constructed as a 'threat' to the children, as a 'bad mother', ultimately losing even her rights of access. In the here and now of the session, she still seems unsure whether or not the subject position of 'mother' is available to her, hesitating before taking issue with the social worker about what is the 'right' way to treat a premature baby.

T: But, of course, this can happen, can't it, when a child is...
A: [Interrupting] I said if a child's asleep, then I leave it asleep. I said I won't wake it up. If a child's miserable, I said, and if it wants to go to sleep, then I let it, I said, because it's not you that's got to suffer him being miserable. If a child's tired, then I believe in letting it go to sleep and not waking it up for a feed. If it's hungry, it can wake me up. And that's how I've been with all my kids.
T: Right. So, going back to this Care arrangement, you found it quite difficult visiting the children in foster care?
A: They wouldn't let me go down because they used to say I upset them. I suppose it was because Tracey was 2½ and, you know, I used to feel bad inside because it used to hurt her every time I used to have to go. Because she never cried - she used to go away and play.
T: But you hurt inside, did you?
A: I felt a bit bad that they had to go into a home because of me being so stupid - like taking the overdose. [Dave looks uncomfortable and turns away from Angela and the therapist.] But I dunno, it just... [Dave looks back towards Angela.] After a bit, I got used to it - just sitting at home and coming away without them. At first it was just a big puzzle. I couldn't make anything out and my mind just wasn't with anything. I was just in a world of my own.

The theme in the family organisation that comes to the fore here is that of withdrawing and shutting off emotionally in the face of unbearable pain. The subjectivities of the more powerless members of the family - Angela and the children - become organised in relation to the passive aspect of the Be Strong driver: the Keep Quiet driver-adaptation. When Angela's distress became too great, she seemed to lack any permission to express it directly in the family and instead put herself to "sleep" by taking the overdose. Her only way of taking control was, paradoxically, to deny herself the possibility of expressing her own feelings, and thereby reinforcing the repressive organisation of family subjectivity at the level of emotionality. Similarly, all she could do was to impose this transactional horizon on to Matthew: if he was feeling "miserable", she would perhaps see projected on to him a reflection of her own pain and so would be unable "to suffer him being miserable" and could only let him "go to sleep". Similarly, Tracey's personal subjectivity has

become constructed in the same manner. She too shut off from any distress when her mother had to leave her: "She never cried - she used to go away and play".

When the therapist tries to enable Angela to express some of her hurt, she is unable to accept this support. Instead she discounts her feelings in her own internalisation of patriarchal discourse, in which she subjects any such expression as being "stupid". This is reinforced by Dave's indication of his discomfort with such serious emotional issues (in the here-and-now and probably also in the past) - a powerful and oppressive signal, given his position of patriarchal power. Thus, it is not surprising that she felt she had to suppress her feelings of anger or hurt about what was happening to her children: she "got used to it" and withdrew again into "a world of her own".

A: Then, after a bit, I got used to it. But we wasn't allowed to go together. Either he had to go on his own or I had to go on my own.
T: I see.
A: Because going together, it confused them, because they thought they was coming home if we came together.
[Angela explains how the foster mother had reported to the social worker that the children were "upset" by her visits.]
T: So Matthew does well when he's in Care.
A: Well they reckoned so, [Turns to Dave] didn't they? He did improve, I admit. I suppose I was in the wrong letting him sleep as long as I did. But when he was there he was so happy he used to crawl an everything. It come to me that - when I was going - that he was only a baby. But it didn't worry him.
T: So he benefited from being in Care and he enjoyed that.
A: Well, by the looks of it, yes. But he's only a baby so you can't really tell. But he did have a vast improvement on him being in Care.
D: Yes.
A: It felt nice to see him improve the way he had. When I was with him, he was so floppy - he was falling to sleep. When they had him, it was as if they had more time for him than what I did. And he just improved ever so well - crawling and everything. I couldn't believe it when I went down.

Angela starts by describing how, subjected within the punitive discourse of the Care Apparatus, their organisation as a parenting subjectivity was forcibly dismantled. They were not allowed to appear 'together' in front of the children within the terms of a discourse of 'the best interests of the children' that was defined by the substitute parenting subjectivity, the foster parents. As, at this stage, no legal powers had been used, the degree of ideological 'power over', that was wielded by the Social Services Department and the foster family, serves as an indicator of the structural weakness of the Watkins' class position.

Angela gives up trying to transact with the therapist from the position of 'good mother', as this position is not made available to her within the professionally defined childcare discourse within which she is now being resubjected. She has no choice but to take on the alternative position of 'bad mother', at least in comparison to the foster mother. Paradoxically, this position does allow her to express her pleasure at Matthew's progress away from her: "It felt nice to see him improve the way he had". In particular, she identifies the way in which he was no longer "so floppy" - no longer giving up and shutting off, but "crawling and everything". Clearly, it was possible for him to construct himself as active and outgoing within the organisation of the foster family's subjectivity - they could have "time for him" in such a subject position in a way that Angela could not, given her apparent breakdown at the level of emotionality. This breakdown would seem to reflect a wider exclusion of emotional expression beneath the transactional horizon of the family as a whole - as part of maintaining some semblance of a functioning subjectivity at material and ideological levels.

[There follows a long discussion of the practicalities of Angela and Dave's current application for Matthew to be received into Care. Then the therapist starts to construct a family geneogram, beginning with Angela. She is interrupted by her consultant who hands a message to her.]

T: Well, this is a message to me from [consultant]. I think I'll read it out to you. It says, "I think that this situation that we have here is a lot more serious than a simple request for a break in Care. My reasons are:

(1) The fact that Angela is prepared to leave the decision to Matthew about whether to return home or not seems to me that she doesn't really care much one way or the other.

(2) I wonder too how much Dave cares about the children, since the last time two of them went into Care, he didn't offer to care for them.

(3) Most parents asking for Care, as a break in a desperate situation, are in an emotional state - a mixture of hurt, anger, distress, worry. This would be very understandable in this situation, but in fact this isn't the case here. Both parents are very calm and I feel that their lack of emotion is more worrying, not just for Matthew but for the two girls too".

This intervention does not conform at all to the principles of the Milan School. There is no positive connotation of the functionality of existing patterns of behaviour. Instead it is confrontational: it challenges Angela and Dave to construct themselves as an ideologically appropriate caring and controlling parenting subjectivity (and not leave vital decisions to Matthew or fail to provide emergency care). However it reverses the conventional gender bias of a parenting subjectivity by challenging Angela to construct herself in a Controlling Parent subject position and challenging Dave to construct himself in a Nurturing Parent Subject position. The intervention then confronts their failure to transact at the level of emotionality as if it were their choice - their responsibility - and backs this up with the implicit threat that, unless they stop 'refusing' to be emotional, the Care Apparatus might judge the existing organisation of their family subjectivity to be so out of line with what is expected that it should, once more, be dismantled.

Although on the surface this intervention is punitive, in a paradoxical

and manipulative way, it may have been intended to help them to break through their block at the level of emotionality, by both stimulating an angry response and giving permission to transact at this level.

It is debatable whether, overall, such a confrontational intervention could be empowering for a family subjectivity that is, in class terms, so powerless. It is delivered from people who are clearly occupying a much more powerful class position and its punitive tone emphasises the relative inequality between them. It is questionable whether the attempt to empower Angela by confronting the imbalance in the parenting subjectivity will actually be heard as such, or whether it is simply heard as a further put down of them as parents. Unless these basic issues of powerlessness are addressed, it must be doubtful whether a manoeuvre to force them into expressing feelings will have any lasting empowering effect. A more positive strategy might have been to work on empowering the family unit in its external transactions (e.g. with extended family and State Apparatuses), or, alternatively, to seek to empower them as separate individuals and, if necessary, allow the family unit to break up, perhaps temporarily (as had seemed to work for Matthew when he went into Care before).

D: D'you mean that something's going to happen to the two girls?
T: It sounds like that, doesn't it? Maybe she is wondering if once Matthew is in Care, then is it going to be the two girls next? [Pause.]
D: Does she want our answers on that as well?
T: Do you want to reply to that?
D: Yes, I do want to reply to the one at least. When I should have looked after the kids. Well, we've got to live on, keep things going. We've got H.P.s to pay out. If I don't go to work, I lose my job and how am I going to look after the kids? The social worker thought it was for the best that they went into a home for the time being.

The immediate effect of the intervention is not to trigger a direct expression of emotionality from Dave or Angela. Instead, it triggers Dave, who hitherto had kept in the background, into stepping into the position of head of household to defend the family subjectivity as best he can against the attack. However he clearly feels in too weak a position to take on the therapist or even to get angry with her. His defence is undertaken from the role position of Victim (saying, in effect, "What could I do - I was the victim of circumstances"). While his lack of choice was undoubtedly real, due to his material situation, he denies himself both the possibility of being angry about it then, or angry with the therapist's insinuations now.

A: I know I don't feel as much for Matthew, but that's only because of the way he is and the way I am with him. But I still try and give him love and affection - but it just doesn't work. I mean, I went into him last night and kissed him goodnight. He never kissed me - just said he wanted to go to bed early. So I kissed him when he was asleep.
[Pause.]
T: So Matthew's a bit different from the others?
A: Well, he is, yes. I mean, the girls do show me love and affection and that. I suppose, in a way, she's right: I do show a bit more feeling to the girls because they do show more.
T: I'm not sure that she said that.
A: Yeah, she reckons that we don't care - we've got no feelings.
T: [Reads] Both parents are very calm and I feel that their lack of emotion is more worrying, not just for Matthew, but for the two girls too.
A: I mean it's no good cracking up [looks over to Dave]. I just said to Dave, I feel like a good cry but I won't cry. Not unless... I don't cry in front of other people. If I do start getting emotional or crying or things like that, we aren't going to get nothing done. I mean [female friend] saw the state I was in, Friday. I mean if that isn't showing feelings because I'm that worried that I can't show my son affection and he can't give it to me. Everything that I try to do doesn't work, and what he does for me. If that doesn't show my feelings for my son, I don't know what is. I'm just trying to sort out something that's the best for him. I think, by going into Care, it might help me, if he's away from me, to show feeling towards me and my feelings towards him.

Angela seems to have heard the last part of the intervention as an accusation directed primarily towards her (as the parent who is conventionally expected to be taking on the 'expressive' role) to the effect that "We don't care - we've got no feelings". While she clearly recognises the gravity of this charge - that she may become disqualified as a 'mother' for failing to construct herself in the appropriate manner - she seems unable to rise to the challenge and express her feelings directly. In the face of this here-and-now threat, she falls back into her learned experience of powerlessness and organises her personal subjectivity more and more around a passive Keep Quiet driver.

We can only speculate as to the origins of such an adaptation, but this driver represents the main option that is open to a child to prevent her/his annihilation at an emotional level if s/he is forced to submit to systematic sexual or other abuse: while her/his body is being violated, s/he can at least hold on to some vestige of personal power by shutting off from (and thereby, in some sense, protecting) her/his feelings. To make such a decision ("I don't cry in front of other people"), protects the child from the final humiliation of exposing the rest of her/his vulnerability to further abuse. Being forced to open up at this level would therefore constitute a final violation of personal subjectivity: far from being a liberation of personal power, it would feel like "cracking up" and losing all control over personal boundaries.

Although Angela responds to the therapist's challenge in one sense - she talks about expressing emotion - she protects her feelings in the here-and-now by talking only about how she expressed her distress in another

(safer) situation: a transaction of mutuality with someone in a similar class and gender position. Gender is clearly important, since not only is she able to let out some of her feelings in front of her female friend, but she also finds that she can "show a bit more feeling to the girls because they show more", whereas her feelings become repressed when she is subjected at the losing end of a competitive power battle with Matthew (and more importantly, one suspects, with Dave). It only seems to be safe for her to show affection towards Matthew in a situation where he cannot reject or humiliate her at an emotional level: "So I kissed him when he was asleep". This then forms the basis of her rationale for Care: enforced separation might enable her to show "my feeling towards him".

[Angela continues about how she does show affection for Matthew: "If I didn't care for Matthew, I wouldn't buy him nothing". She also mentions Dave's feelings.]

A: He said that he felt - he feels - bad because he was losing a son. I mean he cried yesterday, like, after we was gone. He cried. [Turns to Dave] Dave had tears in his eyes, didn't he? But he said, if it would help, then it was for the best. But if that isn't showing feelings, I don't know what is. Now I'm getting a bit ratty now [looks to Dave for confirmation] because I just think them questions were a little bit hard.

T: Really, the questions were hard?

A: Yes, I think it was a bit below the belt.

[The therapist refers to the "reasons" for their judgements contained in the intervention.]

Again avoiding the therapist's challenge to express her own feelings (perhaps fearing violation from someone in authority - albeit a woman), Angela switches to expressing her husband's feelings for him. Once installed in this ideologically sanctioned position, she feels sufficiently powerful to take on the therapist (once she has checked with Dave that she is doing the 'right' thing) and suggest that the

intervention was in some sense abusive to them both: "a bit below the belt". The therapist fails to support Faith in this, her nearest expression of her feelings ("I'm getting a bit ratty"), responding not at an emotional level, but returning to the alienating distance of a discourse of "reasons", one that places her clearly in a position of 'power over' Angela.

A: Nobody can say that I'm not trying. It's not what I want, but I think it's for the best because I can't take no more.
T: But there are two parents here looking after Matthew.
A: Yes, but he plays up just as much for me as he does for Dave. And Dave's seen him for the last four days and Dave didn't think he could play up, but he did do.
T: Can he show affection for you, Dave?
D: Not really. Sometimes he does, but not all the time. He says to people, "When my Dad comes home, I want to play football". But when I get home, he just doesn't want to know. Or if I have too much of the ball, he says, "That's it" and sulks and just walks off and goes in the corner. He just doesn't want to know.

Instead of colluding with Angela (as the woman) taking all the responsibility and all the blame for the childcare problems, the therapist exploits the weakness of the organisation of their family subjectivity to invite Dave into a position of taking equal responsibility. She moves straight into an enquiry about his emotional relationship with his son (although she stops short of asking him about *his* feelings). Dave is not in a position to resist this (as Martin Hirst had been able to do from his position of greater patriarchal and class power). Indeed, his answer is disarmingly honest. In common with how many fathers are constructed in patriarchal society, Dave does not seem to have access to the level of emotionality in transacting with his son; instead, he can only *do* things with him, like playing football. However, what emerges here is that he does not do this so much from a

position of 'father', but from a Child subject position, one in which he is competing for the ball with his son up to the point where the game has to be abandoned. This scenario raises the possibility that Dave may occupy similar positions in relation to Matthew within the organisation of family subjectivity at home: instead of occupying the ideologically prescribed role of household head, it is possible that he may typically take on a Child position, competing with Matthew for Angela's attention.

[The therapist raises with Dave the issue of "losing a son".]

D: I think we would lose him if he didn't buck his ideas up and he loved it in a home - that means we've lost him again, haven't we? If he doesn't want to come back to us, that means that he's won and we've lost. Well, I have. [...] He knows what he's doing and he's got his own mind. He's got it all sussed out. It doesn't make no difference if we have him back, it's going to be ... like having a demon.

T: Like having a demon?

D: Like the devil.

T: Do you feel he is beyond you being able to influence him?

D: It doesn't make no difference what we try to do. I talk to him sometimes when I put him to bed. I say, "You ain't going to play up tomorrow - play your Mum up - because you're only going to get into trouble and be put away". He says, "No", definitely, "No". No smiling; straight faced. "I ain't going to play up". Then, when I come home, he's played up. He'll laugh at me and say, "Yes, I did". He's enjoyed it. That's the way it goes. So when we discussed it, we think he should go away for a bit. Might learn him a lesson.

Subjected within the ideological construction of 'manhood', Dave's relationship with Matthew is constructed in terms of competitive power: unless Matthew is sufficiently intimidated by the Care process, "he's won and we've lost". Dave's difficulty in inserting himself in a position of patriarchal 'power over', due to some combination of his personal history of oppression and his current class position, is reflected in the way that he is threatened by his son's growing autonomy: "He knows what he's doing and he's got his own mind". (Perhaps his daughters, whatever their behaviour, would not constitute

such a direct threat to his position.) Finding himself unable to construct himself as a 'man', Dave transacts instead from a powerless Child subject position, and projects on to Matthew an almost magical potency: he becomes "a demon" or "the devil" simply because he exercises some independence of "will".

In order to maintain some vestige of control, Dave has had to embrace, as a substitute for his own Controlling Parent subject position, elements from outside (State) apparatuses in order to provide the requisite authority. In this way, threatening Matthew that he will be put away to "learn him a lesson", becomes an integral part of the ongoing organisation of family subjectivity. However, in doing so, Dave pays the price of submitting his family's subjectivity to potential engulfment and dismantling within the more powerful subjectivities of State Apparatuses, raising the galling possibility that Matthew might find that "he loved it in a home" and never wish to return.

[Dave goes on to talk about Matthew's behaviour and, in particular, his stealing.]

D: I've talked to our Mum about it. And our Dad. And they couldn't understand where he got it from. When we did it, when we were little 'uns, we were walloped. All right, we did it when we were older, but not that young. Our Mum and Dad turned round and said, "It's best to have him put away. He'll understand then and he'll see that he's done wrong. And he might snap out of it." She said he should go in a Home and see what it's like, [turns to Angela] didn't she?

A: [Looking down and sounding quiet and depressed] Yeah. [...]

Here Dave shows the extent to which his subjectivity, and hence that of his family, is still organised as part of his family of origin. He remains subjected within their ideological construction of authority in the family, in which violence, underpinned by the ever-present threat of

State intervention is seen as the only basis of parental control over children. This reflects a class culture in which parents (and perhaps, more specifically, men) do not have access to positions that are legitimated by structures of economic or ideological power, and are hence unable, on any consistent basis, to maintain their family subjectivities as autonomous responsible units. Although apparently unhappy with this, Angela seems herself to be so subjected within such discourses, that she has litle alternative but to acquiesce to them.

T: If Matthew went into a home, that would be a loss for you, you would lose a son?
D: It ain't so much that I'd lose a son, if it came to the point where it was what it was before - voluntary. If it became compulsory - that means, in other words, we've lost a son. Because it's what he wants to... And we aren't going to see him again.
T: You seem to think that you'd miss out most in that situation.
D: Yeah. Well, then he can change his whole name if he wants to. He can change it to whoever he wants to. So, in other words, we've lost a son because he ain't ours. [...]
T: So having a son in your family is important to you?
D: Yes it's important to me and to my elder brother as well, and he's tried for years. [...] He'd do anything to have a son. [...]
T: Angela, do you want to comment on any of that?
A: No.
[Therapist is called out for consultation.]

Dave elaborates on the fact that he is concerned at an emotional level with the loss of Matthew not *as a person* (he actually sounds as if he would be glad to see the back of him), but *as a son* and all that this means within the patriarchal ideology of the family. A 'son' represents the inheritance of his patriarchal power: someone who is subject to his authority and to whom he can pass on his power, and hence someone whose very existence enhances his own sense of power as 'head' of the household. This inheritance of men's 'right' to control family organisation is symbolised in the importance given to the continuity of the family name. Thus for Dave, the real threat of compulsory Care is not that he will be disempowered in relation to the Care Apparatus, but that Matthew will be so empowered in relation to him that he will be able "to change his whole name if he wants to" and become a man in his own right whose power position owes nothing to that of his father.

The therapist opens up the possibility that this patriarchal discourse may be questioned or commented on. However, Angela's inability to respond to this opening would indicate that her degree of subordination is such that she is not even aware of how oppressive such a discourse is for her. Within this model of family therapy, it is not easy for a therapist to be more overtly supportive to a woman, either by asking her how she *feels* about fathers and sons being so powerful in family organisation, or by herself confronting the man and challenging the oppressive nature of such ideological positions. When such a discourse is allowed to proceed unchallenged, there is an implicit reinforcement of the existing patriarchal organisation of the family's subjectivity.

[Therapist returns.]

T: [Consultant] and I have been talking and we were wondering if Matthew does leave this family and starts a new life somewhere else, how much of a gap will it leave in your lives, your lives together? Dave, you've talked about losing a son and what this means to you. We wonder what the next stage will be for Angela and Dave together. All normal married couples need something to argue about. What will they argue about if Matthew's gone? Will the arguing have to stop or will you both have to split up? Can Angela - can you be sure you will be happier if Matthew is sorted out?

A: I dunno. It's hard to say until it happens.

T: We wondered how many more overdoses before you know what you want out of life.

A: I didn't take my overdoses because of the pressure of my kids. I took my overdoses for other reasons. Not because of my kids. And my kids were always fed and looked after before I even took my overdose.

This intervention returns more closely to a systemic approach. Matthew's difficult behaviour is connoted positively as being functional in maintaining the homeostasis of the spouse subsystem: it keeps them together because they have something to argue about. Arguing itself is connoted positively: "All married couples need something to argue about". This emphasis on arguing is presumably a response to the total

lack of any expression of anger or conflict between Angela and Dave during the interview so far. All that we have seen is passivity and the pathos of their subordination within outside discourses and Apparatuses.

What is missing in this intervention is any understanding of how this 'flatness' and inability to express conflict may relate to both the subjection of the family within oppresive external power relations (including those of State agencies), and to the limited range of subject positions available to Angela within the internal organisation of the family. The only connection that is made is between Angela's overdosing behaviour - the only hint of her true feelings - and the possibility of her experiencing frustration at not getting what she wants out of life (or even knowing what that is). Unfortunately, the way that it is delivered comes over almost punitively and implies that she is being "stupid" taking overdoses because she *should* know what she wants out of life. No recognition is given of the possibility that surviving at all, in a position as powerless and oppressive as her own, may actually depend on shutting off from almost all her feelings, wants and needs.

Unless there is a real change in her subject position, either through the empowerment of the whole family subjectivity in its dealings with the outside world (in particular, extended family and State Apparatuses), or through a shift in the dominance of patriarchal ideology within the family, Angela will not be in a position to enter into any meaningful negotiations (with Dave, the children, the Care Apparatus, or anything else) about what she wants for herself. So far, the position that she has occupied does not seem to have given her any

right to exist as a person in her own right. This is exemplified by the way in which she performed from the position of 'mother', feeding and looking after her children, right up to the point when she was about to take her own life.

T: I think we'll draw to a close now and we'd like to see you soon. [...] We want you to do some homework. We want you to come up with some plans of what you are going to do when Matthew is away. [Therapist discusses arrangements and offers appointment time.] Can you make that? [To Dave] How's the situation with work?
A: [Interrupting] I think that worrying about us is more important than his work.
T: So shall we say 4.30 on Monday?
D: Yes.
A: Do you want them results for Monday?
T: Yes.
A: [Sounding animated] So we've now got to go back and prepare how we think it's going to be when Matthew is not there.

Shifting the focus on to the marital relationship, and by implication on to the transactional level of emotionality, would seem to have, for the first time in this session, engaged Angela in the therapeutic process. The very raising of this issue by the female therapist contitutes a real challenge to the dominant organisation within the family which has so far marginalised any expression of feelings. Angela displays a sudden shift of mood, no longer shutting off entirely from her feelings and instead becoming positively assertive and energetic. Furthermore, she would seem to derive some personal support from the therapist's interest in this issue, and this empowers her quite dramatically to overrule her husband's concern for his job (his economic power base) and state that sorting out the marital relationship (her emotional power base) must take priority. In doing so she takes on a conventional, but powerful, feminine position within the family subjectivity, as the one who takes responsibility for the partner subjectivity.

SESSION 2

T: How have things been? Have you been giving Matthew some thought over the weekend? Have you given yourselves much thought?
D: He's been quite good. [Turns towards Angela] He hasn't played up at all really.
A: Not much, no. [...] He's played up, but we've told him off and he's done as he's told.
T: There have been no incidents of stealing at all?
A: Only like today, over at my mate's. But I happened to cop him and told him off. He just went and sat down and played in the bedroom. And then he went out again and I told him to stay in.
T: He responded to that, did he?
A: About twice. I had to tell him about twice. I copped him before it got too far. [...]

It would seem that the sudden change in the organisation of family subjectivity that we witnessed at the very end of the first session has not been sustained. Dave sets the tone of the session by ignoring the second part of the therapist's question and instead focusing on Matthew and establishing, as the dominant transactional level, discourse about activity. Angela does not contest this and continues in the same vein, the only disagreement being being the extent to which Matthew's behaviour might have improved. Thus there is no response to the question "Have you given yourselves much thought?" now, or at any stage during the session. Interestingly, the therapist never picks this up or asks whether the "homework", that Angela had seemed so keen on, has actually been completed. It is as if she too has become caught up in maintaining the (patriarchal) organisation of family subjectivity.

T: You both look a bit low today.
D: It's the weather. Soaking.
A: Why don't you tell the truth?
D: What we were talking about?
A: He just thought, and I just thought, that some of the questions that [ ] said were a little bit below the belt - and it did hurt. I just want a break from Matthew because I can't control him, that's all. I'm not trying to get rid or him. It's not what I want or what

nobody wants. But I just thought him having a break and me having a break would give me time to catch up on Matthew, and Matthew time to catch up on me, and perhaps our family could be a family again.

T: You feel that your family hasn't been like a family lately?

A: No, it isn't. I mean, me and Dave, and one thing and another, and then Matthew. I mean, me and Dave - we never argue over Matthew, it's always other things. We've never argued over the kids and my overdoses have never been over the kids. I treat my three kids the same. It's just when you buy Matthew something, he just destroys it.

[Angela continues about Matthew thanking her for a pair of new shoes over the weekend, but later biting the baby's leg.]

It would seem that the confrontational tone of the first intervention had a more long lasting impact on Angela than any possibility of support in dealing with her marriage that she might have taken from the second. The former would seem to have left her, personally and on behalf of the partner/parenting subjectivity, with a grumbling and debilitating sense of hurt and injustice. Far from feeling sufficiently empowered to start renegotiating the organisation of their partner subjectivity, she is now situated in a collusive alliance with him as a parenting subjectivity which is under threat within a State controlled discourse of 'adequate childcare'. When Dave fails to take on the position of defending family subjectivity - perhaps because the issue concerns feelings - Angela is forced into the position of protecting the family (including Dave) against the perceived accusations of the therapist. In doing so, she excludes the possibility of expressing her own feelings or desires.

Nevertheless, inserted within her childcare discourse from the position of 'mother', Angela briefly discloses that she and Dave have argued, and hints that this preceded and maybe led on to problems with Matthew: "I mean, me and Dave, and one thing and another, and then Matthew". Whereas the intervention had suggested that having Matthew "to argue

about" might have been functional in maintaining their relationship, she clarifies that, while there is considerable conflict within the partner subjectivity, "We never argue over Matthew, it's always other things". It is unfortunate that, having touched on what would seem to be the real issue for her (her conflict with Dave), she finds the need to retreat so quickly into her position of childcare spokeswoman.

A: He looks at me as if he's looking right through me. It's a horrible feeling. It's a very cold look, as though he's shutting me out. In the end, I just give up because I'm not getting through to him. I'm wasting my energy. And I say, "Just go away" in the end because he just doesn't answer me whatsoever. I mean, I've sat down nicely with him and he stands there looking at me just with his eyes. He'll laugh at Dave, but he doesn't laugh with me. He just stands there staring at me as if to say, "I ain't talking to you - I only talk to my Dad" - as if I've done something really bad. And I say "Just go away".
[Therapist asks about any changes in Matthew's attitude over the weekend and then goes ahead in making arrangements with Angela and Dave for just Matthew to have a two week break in foster care, in line with their request.]

Angela briefly moves out of her parenting discourse and starts to express her own feelings of emotional rejection. Although she is speaking in relation to Matthew, one wonders how much this is a projection of her experience of her marital relationship which, as she has already hinted, is where her main distress is located ("My overdoses have never been over the kids"), but about which she has been unable to talk directly. While she feels powerless and unsupported to deal with her feelings in relation to Dave, she can use her power position as a parent to protect herself against further rejection by Matthew: she can translate her response of "Just go away" into action by insisting on his reception into Care. The therapist seems powerless to challenge the diversion of the issue onto (and 'scapegoating' of) Matthew in this way.

SESSION 3

[Angela starts by describing an incident in which another woman had hit Tracey in a shop.]

A: She lashed at me first, so I hit her back. I mean, nobody hits me and gets away with it.
[Dave reaches over and slaps Angela on the knee, and grins towards the therapist.]

A: I mean, not with my kids.

D: [Interrupting] I did didn't I? [Laughs.]

A: [Remaining serious] I mean, not when my kids are involved.
[Therapist discusses practical arrangements for Matthew to go into Care.]

This short scene illustrates how Angela's ability to stand up to others depends entirely on the subject position in which she is located. Subjected as mother and protector "with my kids", she can be pugnacious in her defence: "Nobody hits me and gets away with it". However, as Dave delights in pointing out, when she is subjected as his wife, she has no right to defend herself against his (play) violence.

[The therapist starts to draw a geneogram (family tree) on a large sheet of paper. She discusses the history of each member of the extended family in turn, and their interrelationships, before asking about how Angela and Dave met, and their subsequent relationship.]

A: Dave's not very nice when he's got beer in him, [To Dave] are you?

D: [Looking sheepish] I haven't had any for ages.

A: Not since that last incident. That's what put you off. Because you came in drunk. He was standing there. He thought he was great, standing there in front of the kids with a bottle of beer in his hands. So I says to the kids, "Take no notice, it's all beer talk." And he started on me and, all of a sudden, clever clogs here decided to put his head through my kitchen window. So I said to the kids, "Take no notice", trying to calm them down. "Shut the bathroom door," I said, "just ignore him, it's all beer." Then comes Dave, boots the bathroom door open and stands there with the beer in his hands. The kids were that frightened and screaming, and Matthew kept screaming, "No, no, no." Then he tried to stab himself with a knife. Then it was me.

T: This happened out of the blue? [To Dave] You don't just put your head through the window, do you?

A: Dave does. When he's got beer in him. It's twice that Dave's threatened me with a knife.

T: [To Dave] Was it a bad time for you? Were things going on that you weren't happy with?

D: Yes, I'd had a tiff with Angela.
A: [Interrupting] That's twice he's threatened me with a knife.
T: Was that very long ago?
D: It was some time ago, wasn't it?
A: It was at [Dave's brother's] christening for the baby.
T: Do you want to talk about that - or another day?
D: [Quietly] Another day. [...]

The geneogram exercise shifts the focus from the current organisation of the family around Matthew as scapegoat and opens up the transactional level of talking about relationships and feelings. This offers a supportive context within which Angela can start to look at her partner relationship. The events that she chooses to describe constitute a breakdown in Dave's personal subjectivity at the transactional level of activity. The 'domestic siege', in which weapons are used to threaten violence against self and others, is a form of breakdown that, in patriarchal culture, is generally specific to men. It may be seen to arise out of the way in which men are subjected within ideology in such a position that their sense of self depends on their having to be in control of others, in this case, their household. If this position is threatened, there is likely to be an escalation of the compulsion to exercise such control. Trapped by their position within ideology which prevents them venting their distress at an emotional level, breakdown is likely to occur at the level of behaviour/activity.

Faced with his distress at his failure to construct his family as an autonomous unit under his control, Dave would seem to undergo such a breakdown of his personal subjectivity. This takes the form of a parody of the position that he is supposed to occupy: if he can do nothing else, at least he can show that he has the power, as a man, to stab himself or his wife or children. In this desperate and self-destructive

bid to hold on to his position within patriarchal ideology, he only succeeds in terrorising Angela and the children. Because he has transacted from an angry and frightened Child subject position, rather than the patriarchally sanctioned Persecutor role, he fails to win back from them (or the outside world) the 'respect' for his position which he had felt to be lacking. Rather than having patriarchal power as of ideological 'right', and backing this up with 'appropriate' use of violence, he now only possesses such power on a temporary basis, for as long as Angela and the children have no alternative but to stay with him and to acquiesce to the threat of his terror hanging over them. He is now "clever clogs" brandishing a knife rather than the man of the house.

Nevertheless, his use of violence still renders him intimidating in the here-and-now of the session. He represents a physically strong and potentially violent man operating within a patriarchal culture that covertly sanctions violence against women. It is within this context that we note how the female therapist repeatedly cuts across Angela's accusation that, "It's twice Dave has threatened me with a knife"; how, instead of confronting his use of violence, she seeks to find an excuse for it, "Were there things going on that you weren't happy with?"; and how she is willing to grant Dave the option of deferring the discussion to another day. The therapist may be dulled in her response to the power issues here because of thinking within a conventional systems framework in which violence by one system member to another is viewed as but one punctuation of a pattern of circular causation between people in positions of equal interactional influence: it is no more (or less) significant than the transactions that precede or follow it.

T: [To Dave] That sort of thing must leave you feeling very unhappy.
D: I did that day.
T: You felt very unhappy that day. Is that blown over now?
A: We still don't see eye to eye now, do we?
T: On that thing?
A: Not just that, other things as well.
T: You said you don't see eye to eye all the time.
D: No, Angela's right and I'm wrong.
A: I dunno, I've sort of drifted away from him. [...]
T: So maybe you're not as close as you used to be - do you have a working relationship? It sounds like you organise things between you, and that can be valuable, can't it? [...]

In examining the aftermath of this incident, the therapist establishes that Dave felt "very unhappy", but then allows him to hide from his real feelings by manoeuvring himself into the Victim role ("Angela's right and I'm wrong") from which he is able to shrug off Adult responsibility for what had happened. However, the therapist does not enquire from Angela how it felt to be threatened with a knife. By not doing so, she feeds into the existing pattern of partner organisation at an emotional level: Angela's feelings are denied any existence and hence do not have a place in the sorting out of marital issues. Finding herself (probably not for the first time) the victim of abuse, Angela is surrounded by a collusive wall of silence. In order to protect herself from further devastation at an emotional level, she has little alternative but to "drift away from him", to cut off from any emotional contact with the man that has abused her. Rather than confronting this process, the therapist positively connotes it as "a working relationship".

T: How would it be different if you didn't argue? What would be there instead?
A: I think what Dave would like is for me to love him...
D: [Interrupting] The way I love you.
A: The way that he sees he loves me. But I don't.
T: I suppose love comes in different shapes and forms and things.
A: Well, I said to Dave that he's left it too late to start showing his feelings and his love now. Why didn't he show it three years ago?
T: Why three years ago?

A: That's when we seemed to be just drifting apart.
T: [To Dave] Can you remember what was happening at that point in time?
D: I thought everything was all right.
T: I notice that Linda is 2½, so maybe... [To Angela] Were you pregnant with Linda?
A: Yes, they said I had a tilted womb and I said, "I'm not, I'm pregnant". When you tried to have [pause, looks down] sex, I used to cry because it used to hurt me that much and I couldn't do it. And I sort of went off it and it doesn't interest me now, but Dave doesn't see it like that, which I understand his point. I mean, I'm being sort of mean, in a way, because I don't even like it. As far as I'm concerned, it's true that Dave hasn't had it for 3 years.
T: And is that a point of disagreement between you?
A: Yes. [Pause.] He wants to know why. He thinks that I must be giving it somebody else because I'm not giving it to him. So I says to him, "Why should I be giving it to someone else if I'm not giving it to you - it just doesn't interest me". It's just a cold subject. I don't know if it's because I feel I'm only 25 and I've got 3 kids as it is. I mean, it's a lot of hard work. [...]
D: I mean you hear about things in the paper like "34 year old can't get enough off her husband so she's got different blokes coming in" and all of a sudden, Angela says she's gone off sex, sex is nothing - it's hard to believe. [Pause.] I know she doesn't want to get pregnant again because she's young anyway. I mean, I suppose I don't want her to have any more kids just yet anyway. I would like another one, but with the way she is, no chance of that.

In this passage, we see how the emotional and sexual relationship between Angela and Dave is constrained and distorted by the subject positions that they occupy within ideology. The definition of "love" becomes the subject of a power struggle. Dave attempts to force Angela to "love" him the "way I love you": to deny her own feelings and redefine herself as a sexual subject in the image of how he defines himself. In patriarchal ideology, as promulgated in the popular press, love becomes conflated with non-stop sexual demand and availability: someone who "can't get enough" off their partner. Emotional closeness becomes represented only in the physical act of sex.

Although Angela understands 'love' in the relationship as his "showing his feelings" (and not in making incessant demands for sex), she is

nevertheless so caught up in this oppressive ideological framework that she actually sees herself as being "mean". This is not simply because she has refused to submit to sexual activity, but because she is unable sufficiently to distort herself at the level of emotionality to appear as wanting sex all the time: "I'm being sort of mean, in a way, because I don't even like it". Subjected as he is within ideology, Dave sees love itself in terms of power and control: the basis of his self-image. Thus, rather that understanding what has happened in terms of Angela's reaction to her sense of violation, he immediately sees it in terms of his loss of control over her sexuality (she "might be giving it to somebody else") and also over her fertility - whether or not she should "have any more kids just yet anyway".

T: When you thought about that and wondered why, you wondered whether it was because Angela didn't want children.
D: Because she doesn't love me, that means I haven't got no rights at all to have sex with her. So I'm nothing to Angela really. Just a friend. [...]
T: And you would prefer to be Angela's lover rather than just her close friend?
D: I would be... I just feel left out, not wanted anymore, just somebody to be there when she wants somebody to be there. That's why I thought that's what I am to her just lately. She knows she can go out because I'll be there.
T: That must feel very lonely.
D: Oh yes. I don't like talking about it to Angela, [sighs] because it just causes arguments, I suppose. But it hurts, hurts a lot. But it's no good talking about it.
T: You've tried to talk about it, but it hasn't been successful.
D: No, I keep saying the wrong things.
T: You have tried to talk about it?
D: I have tried to say why she doesn't love me, but then I get ratty because the answers I want to know are not the ones I'm supposed to be getting. So I get ratty about it and we just start arguing [...]

Dave becomes even more explicit about how Angela's "love" is to be constructed within patriarchal ideology as equivalent to his "rights ... to have sex with her", his control of her as his sexual object. "Love"

thus comes to mean the opposite of being a "friend", or "somebody to be there" to help out the other person; it represents domination rather than mutuality. He experiences his loss of sexual rights as his rejection as a person, since the only position that he knows to be available to him is the ideologically determined position of the dominant partner: "I just feel left out, not wanted anymore". The therapist implicitly accepts these definitions and and offers him sympathy as a Victim ("That must feel very lonely"), as if Angela had the power to accept or reject him *on her terms*. It is the terms in which the discourse of "love" is constructed that determine why their attempts to talk about it are so unsuccessful. These terms are entirely dictated by Dave. It is he who is in a position to define "why she doesn't love me" - Angela has no voice from which she can speak her own desire herself. It is he who is in a position to get angry when she fails to deliver "the answers I want to know". Her only protection for her feelings then (and now) is to withdraw and organise her personal subjectivity according to her Keep Quiet driver-adaptation.

T: But you're still here together. That's hopeful, isn't it?
D: I dunno. I suppose she could be a bit scared of me... [Turns to Angela] Of being left on your own.
A: No.
D: You are. [Quietly] Go on and leave me with the three kids.
T: Your guess would be that Angela's afraid of being left on her own.
D: Well, she'd probably miss out on a couple of things. On things she couldn't afford. I mean you don't get much on the Social anyway with the One Parent Benefit and, the way Mrs Thatcher is going along, there'll be nothing left of it. So you'd lose out on things like that. I know I don't get much, but what I have got, I give to Angela and the kids and that's it. [Pause.]
I'm trying hard, but I don't seem to be getting nowhere. [...]
T: What do you do... What do you do with your frustration?
D: Dunno. I just keep it inside until she's gone out - then I cry.
A: He takes it out on everybody else, on the door.
D: Yes, I take it out on the door, or the wall. [...]

Dave describes the material factors which make Angela dependent within the organisation of the partner subjectivity. Having no real connection at the level of emotionality, the current organisation seems only to be upheld by his constant threat of violence and his economic power as the family breadwinner. His economic power over Angela derives from her lack of positive options, whether as a woman on her own or as a single parent, due to the lack of equal employment prospects or satisfactory State provision in terms of welfare benefits and housing. Angela's position is further weakened by the emotional underpinnings of familial ideology within civil society: the sense of inadequacy, failure and guilt that is projected on to women moving out on their own and which isolates them from those who remain organised as part of two-parent family subjectivities.

T: [To Angela] Do you feel that it is a hopeless case between you, or could he ask the right question?
A: I dunno. I'm just that confused at the moment. I'm just so puzzled by him and there's a lot going on with Matthew. I just don't know what to think. I suppose I'm frightened in case I do start loving him again, and then I'll go back to square one, like being rejected and this, that and the other. Perhaps I am frightened. He keeps saying, "Perhaps you'll love me in the future" and I say, "I don't know, you'll have to see what the future brings". And then he keeps going on, "You want a divorce. That's what you and everybody wants". Yet no-one mentions it - only Dave - and this is what narks me, because he keeps saying it and saying it. [...]
T: So you're not prepared to put your cards on the table at this stage.
A: I dunno. One time I was divorcing him because I'd had a belly-full. I was sick of the arguments, the fights. I've got a sollicitor, but I haven't done much about it. According to Dave, I just use him, use him for a dogsbody.

The therapist's question acknowledges that the terms of Dave's discourse have not, so far, got close to Angela's experience - she has not been asked "the right question". Angela is able to use this support to express her confusion and fear at being subjected within a discourse in

which her only choices were constructed and dictated by Dave: "love" (as defined by him) or "divorce". Whereas it seems legitimate for Dave to make demands on her (as part of "love"), if she asks for anything for herself, this becomes defined as trying to "use him, use him for a dogsbody". The therapist offers no support for Angela to continue to explore her experience and clarify what she wants. Instead the statement, "So you're not prepared to put your cards on the table at this stage" pushes Angela back into having to choose between "love" and "divorce", neither of which reflect her own desires or preferences.

D: That's what I think.
T: That's how you feel.
D: That's how I feel inside. It ain't supposed to be like that in real life, is it? I mean you read about men getting beat up by their wives, [laughs] but that's just the way I am inside. Everybody else's marriage seems to be perfect bar mine. I never thought it would happen to me.
T: You thought it was never going to happen to you - is that because of you or because of the way you and Angela were once?
D: Both. It's just the way I am. I mean, I actually haven't been perfect.
T: What do you think you could have done differently?
D: Showed a bit more love and kindness towards her. When Matthew was born, she said I neglected both of them. I suppose I did because I used to go out all of the time. I used to be in the darts team and football and Pool - or down the boozer. And I used to leave Angela in the house with the kids. I haven't done that for ages.
T: Do you think you were more distant then than you are now?
D: I didn't think I was doing anything wrong. I thought I was doing what everybody else does when they're married - they can go out and enjoy themselves and have fun.
T: So you saw your mates doing that?
D: I saw my mates doing it and I thought, "I can do it". But I never thought about Angela - what she was doing.

Instead of staying with Angela's experience of fear and bewilderment, the therapist chooses to support Dave to make the shift from the level of thinking to that of his feelings ("That's how you feel") and, for the first time, Dave is able to become aware of, and start to express, the

gulf between his actual experience of himself in relation to Angela, and how he had thought things *should* be from his position within patriarchal ideology. His notion of a "perfect" marriage is one in which "everybody" (i.e. the man) is totally free to go out and do whatever he wants, while the woman remains at home, unquestioningly under his control, doing all the domestic and child-care work. However, through making contact with his own experience, rather than filtering it through this ideology, he is at last able to take responsibility for some of the effects that his actions have had on Angela at an emotional level, and to say what he would have liked to have done differently.

T: Do you remember that time, Angela?
A: Yes, I used to go to the hospital every morning afternoon and night and Dave wouldn't come over, only - that was on Christmas, when he was born, he went up to see him. I think he went up to see him. I don't know, because he was rushed straight off - Matthew - because he was premature, see, and he was having a job breathing and he had to go under an oxygen mask. When Dave come in I asked him to hold him and I know he was really frightened because he was no bigger that a doll, a premature doll, and Dave said "No", and he tended to go and look at all the other babies instead of standing there and looking at his own son.
D: I just wanted to know why they were bigger than mine. [...]
T: [To Angela] You had to give Matthew a lot of attention in the early months. You must have got very close to him.
A: Well, I did. And then when Dave started drifting away from me, I drifted away from Matthew, as if to say, "It was your fault". I used to feed him and that was it. I used to push him to one side. [...]
T: So Matthew and Dave are in the same position, really, to you. You all have difficulty in getting close.
A: I have difficulty in getting close to Dave and Matthew. They seem to be the same at the moment, but Tracey and Linda, no. I'm very close to the girls. But, Dave and Matthew, I'm not close at all. [The therapist is called out by the consultant and returns to give them feedback on their honesty and sadness, and to suggest to them that they focus on their marriage while Matthew is in Care.]

What emerges here is the extent to which both parents projected very strong feelings on to the space that Matthew came to occupy - how

aspects of his personal subjectivity were already constructed for him in ways over which he had no control. As we have seen earlier, Dave had a very clear expectation that a "son" represented a reflection and an extension of his patriarchal power. Consequently, it is not surprising that he was shocked to see his son appear as a tiny, fragile and vulnerable creature, so at odds with his preconceived notion (and which perhaps reflected all too clearly his own fragility and vulnerability - feelings from which his position in ideology normally distanced him). His imagery is positively phallic when he says, "I just wanted to know why they were bigger than mine" - and it is interesting how, later, Matthew's signification switched from "premature doll" to "demon".

Angela describes how her feelings towards Dave came to take over her relationship with Matthew, although she had been initially close to him: "when Dave started drifting away from me, I drifted away from Matthew, as if to say, 'It was your fault'". She displays great insight into the fact that she displaced her anger against Dave (a male who was oppressive and unavailable) on to Matthew (a male who was vulnerable and ever-present). While she felt powerless to confront Dave with her feelings, she was in a position to project them on to Matthew and then to reject him. In this way, she constructed a subject position for Matthew to occupy *as if he were Dave*. Within the organisation of family subjectivity, their positions become conflated and indistinguishable: "I have difficulty in getting close to Dave and Matthew. They seem to be the same at the moment". This is clearly a gender issue, since she has no problem in being "very close to the girls".

SESSION 4

[The session starts with form filling and an extensive discussion of arrangements for Matthew to go into foster care and what information about Matthew and the family should be given to the foster family.]

T: I suppose we could mention Tracey and Linda. I think we might have to mention that they've been in care once before when you went into hospital.

A: [Head down] Yes. [Sniffs and wipes her eyes] They'll probably want to know why I went into hospital. That was through an overdose.

T: That may be helpful.
[Angela sniffs and mumbles indistinctly; Dave looks away.]

A: I'm the sort of person really, [looks over to Dave] in a way, that gets very depressed.

D: Quickly.

A: I get depressed quickly...

D: [Interjecting] Bored.

A: ... and, you know, just completely fed up.

T: Dave thinks that you get bored.

A: Well, fed up and bored is really the same, isn't it? [...]

Angela seems on the verge of expressing some of the feelings that lay behind her overdose and breakdown. Perhaps due to the authority position taken on by the therapist (as the bureaucratic form-filler), Angela does not turn to her for support; instead, she looks across to Dave before she speaks the word "depressed". However, not only does he offer her no support (as before, he rejects her non-verbally when she tries to show her feelings), but he interrupts and redefines what she is trying to say. As Angela begins to contact the anger underlying her "depression" (that she is "completely fed up"), Dave is able to use his power within the organisation of the partner subjectivity to redefine her depression as just her getting "bored" (a word that is often used by parents to redefine the anger of their children in such a way that they can then be blamed for it). Although pointing out what Dave is doing, the therapist then goes along with Angela's acquiescence to his redefinition that "fed up and bored is really the same thing".

[The therapist continues the process of form-filling, asking Dave for details of family finances and explaining the procedures for visiting. She refers back to a meeting that they had with the Social Services Team Manager about the criteria for whether or not Matthew is allowed to return home after the two weeks are over.]

T: Two weeks is quite long enough for you, is it?

D Not really. But if we say the necessity for Care is longer, they'll probably think that, really, we don't want him anyway. So two weeks and we'll just have to see what happens from there. [To therapist] Because your Head [the Team Manager] was very strict on that.

T: She is, isn't she. Very strict.

A: I suppose she has to be. [Pause.] I dunno, I found her quite understanding. She only said a few things that I thought was a bit low. I mean, like, between me and Dave. I mean that is very hard.

T: What bit between you and Dave?

A: Where she says we've got to try to pull ourselves together. Otherwise, if she didn't think it was working out, they might take him into compulsory, which I think was a bit hard. So, say, if me and Dave don't get on, or even if Matthew isn't fair, that they'll take Matthew off me, because me and Dave can't keep as a family. I thought that was a bit rough, as if to say I have to lie and cheat and say to Dave "I love you" - and yet I don't - just so that I can keep my son. [...] She didn't put it in so many words, but I knew exactly what she was aiming for.

T: You felt a bit trapped by that, did you?

A: Yes, because she said we've got to work hard as a family. But I mean, if it doesn't work out, I don't want to lose my son because me and him can't work it out. [To Dave] I mean, we'll try, won't we? But if I say to Dave it hasn't worked and it's no good - I've still got no feelings for you, I still don't love you - I can't come here and then say, "Well yes, I do love Dave; we're working out as a family", just so that I can keep my son. I'd have to tell the truth, but I wouldn't want to lose Matthew for good. [...]

The figure of the Team Manager would seem to represent the authority of the State Apparatus within whose discourse both the family and (to some extent) the therapist are subjected or "trapped". For the therapist, it is not clear how much this apparent subjection to the dictates of the "very strict" manager is just a strategic manoeuvre, so that she herself does not come to be seen as the embodiment of that 'power over' the family, or whether the management structure of the department means that, in a very real sense, she too cannot seriously question the terms of the discourse that is imposed.

Angela is devastatingly clear about what she thinks she is expected to do in order that they may be seen to be "working out as a family". At the cost of denying her true feelings, she understands that she not only has to construct herself in the position of 'competent mother' but also as 'loving wife', if they are going to be allowed to construct themselves once again as an independent family unit. Dave seems willing to defer to this outside authority - but may feel that he stands to gain if Angela can be reconstructed as a 'loving wife' for him (however phoney this is). By contrast, for Angela, the consequences are, to say the least, "a bit rough": she stands to be locked back into the position of 'loving wife' and sex object (as constructed by Dave), the very position of being subjected to oppression, violation and isolation that had previously driven her to suicide. It is interesting that, despite the implied sanction that she will be separated from her child, she is clear that she will not live the pretence that she understands is required of her: "I'd have to tell her the truth" even though she "wouldn't want to lose Matthew for good".

T: What we'd like to do is, when Matthew is with [foster parents], we all meet up once a week and we'll look at those sorts of things. And I think, for us, 'getting on' means a whole load of things. It doesn't always mean that you have to love each other. We'll just perhaps look at the areas where you do get on and the areas where you don't get on.

A: [Interrupting] But what's going to happen to Matthew? This is all I'm worried about - with me and Dave not seeing eye to eye in that fortnight. Will Matthew be took off me because me and Dave can't see eye to eye? Surely we can still pull together even if me and you don't get on, can't we?

T: I suppose a lot depends on whether you decide to live together at the end of that time.

A: I mean, we don't get on now, but we're still together. We do some things together. It's not that we're always apart.

T: And some people can work out that sort of arrangement where they live together and provide a caring, comfortable...

A: [Interrupting] Being together - it does help the kids because we are together, we're not split up. I mean, I have gone through divorce proceedings between me and Dave, but I haven't actually filled the form in or given any marriage certificate. So therefore you can see they are waiting for me. So I mean, we are trying. [...]

The discourse of the Team manager, as mediated through the therapist, enables Angela to explore only a very limited range of alternatives. For example, she is not offered the possibility of separating from Dave and reconstructing herself (with or without Matthew) within the overall subjectivity of a one-parent family. Instead, all the therapist can offer her are various modifications of her existing partner subjectivity that still construct them "together" as parents. While no longer having to "love" Dave, she is limited in the therapist's discourse to the various positions that might be denoted by "getting on", which the therapist later qualifies as comprising the "sort of arrangement" that will "provide a caring, comfortable" family atmosphere. Angela complies and constructs herself within this ideology ("We are trying"), dutifully identifying herself with the shared assumption that "it does help the kids because we are together" and citing her inability to fill out her divorce papers as evidence supporting this.

SESSION 5

T: Have you been able to visit Matthew?
A: We went Sunday. It didn't go off very good, Sunday. [...] He was miserable, crying, and he didn't speak to me whatsoever at all.
T: How did you understand that?
A: I'm used to it really.
T: So there hasn't been any difference.
A: No. It hurt, but I took no notice and kept talking to him, trying not to let it show. [...]
T: He's in quite a strange situation at the moment. Did you see him as being different to the way he is...
D&A: [Simultaneously] He's happy there.
A: He's really happy and he's not naughty for them whatsoever. [...]
T: [To Dave] Do you think that he's not getting as close to Angela as you would have expected?
D: I'd have thought it would have got better myself, but it doesn't seem to. He's drifting a lot further away.
A: [Interrupting] I mean, he called me a pig. He was very rude, wasn't he? He kept saying "Stupid Daddy" and things like this. He was really rude and I said, "If you don't pack it in, I'm going to smack you". I said, "There's no need for that", so I gave him a whack. [...]

Within Dave's discourse as head of the household, Matthew's reception into Care was both to "learn him a lesson" (reimpose control over him), and as a "break" for both Matthew and Angela, which would somehow lead to their rediscovering their positive feelings for one another. What seems to have happened so far corresponds to Dave's worst fear. Matthew is manifestly thriving within the alternative family organistion into which he has been inserted: he is "really happy" and this is actually giving him support to continue to resist within the punitive discourse set up by Dave (and Angela). It is now far safer for him to be angry, "rude" or "miserable" with them. What is lacking is any emotional support for Angela to be able to hear and deal with his anger as an obvious and appropriate response to his being sent away; instead she feels so powerless herself that she only perceives it as yet another "hurt" in Matthew's 'battle' for emotional supremacy ("I'm used to it") - a similar battle to that which Dave had already won at her expense.

T: So you're feeling shut out again.
A: I'm still feeling the same because it takes him 20 minutes to half an hour before he'll talk to me.
T: Does anyone else shut you out like Matthew does?
A: [Pause] I dunno. [Points towards Dave] Only him over there.
D: I don't shut nobody out.
T: [To Angela] You feel that Dave does. How does he shut you out?
A: I dunno. Me and him still ain't getting on, so [laughs] I still feel shut out at the moment - not having Matthew there - I mean the house is that quiet.
[Angela and the therapist move back to discussing Angela's feelings for Matthew and the distance between them.]

The therapist is able to use the disruption of family subjectivity, (caused by Matthew's absence) to help Angela to experience how she had been projecting on to Matthew her sense of being "shut out" when, ultimately, these feelings related to Dave. She finds that she misses her contact with Matthew: with "not having Matthew there ... the house is that quiet". This brings into stark relief how little contact she receives from Dave: "Me and him still ain't getting on". However, this insight is not sustained or used as an opportunity to raise and deal with the issues of the partner relationship; instead it seems that it is easier and safer for the therapist to go with and become part of the existing organisation of family subjectivity and focus on the relationship between Angela and Matthew as if that were the crucial issue.

A: I talk to our Mum and that lot about it, and she says, "Don't worry about it" and I tell her that Matthew - about the visits and how Matthew's been and she says, "Oh, he'll come round to it". And I seen Sheila [Foster Mother] and she asked me and I told Sheila and she said that's to be expected anyway. But somehow I can't get on with Sheila. I'm not being horrible, but she's all Dave: "Have you seen it through Dave's eyes?" and this, that and the other. [...] I said, "What about somebody looking through mine?" I says. "I really feel - but nobody listens to know how I feel, how me and Matthew are", I said, you know. No offence to Dave, but she was all Dave. That was it. She didn't want to know what I wanted to say, so I just lost my temper with her in the end and she could see I was

getting upset and ratty, and I'm afraid, if she hadn't gone in, I'd have lamped her one.

T: So you couldn't make her understand how upsetting this is for you, what it feels like to be you, Angela, not being able to get close to your son.

A: Yes, to her it didn't seem nothing. It was, "Have you looked at it through Dave's eyes" or, "Have you ever looked at it through Matthew's eyes" and I says, "How about somebody looking at it through my eyes - how I feel - never mind Dave or anybody else: me". But no, she wouldn't have it. [...]

Angela has turned for support to the various women with whom she is in contact, but found that no-one offered her much empathy (this may also apply to some extent to the way the therapist has responded so far). Instead, each has tried to subject Angela within her own particular discourse. Her Mum is unwilling to share her emotional pain to do with her estrangement from Mathew and sees his behaviour as unproblematic: "Oh, he'll come round to it". More oppressive for Angela is Sheila's response. Sheila would seem to operate from an unquestioned acceptance of patriarchal ideology: Angela, as the woman, is made responsible for the maintenance and organisation of family subjectivity at the emotional level; it is her duty to empathise with every male within the family, to think and feel for them, and to construct her own subjectivity in such a way that their needs are always met at the expense of hers. Sheila's own insertion within this form of feminine subjectivity would tend to be reproduced and reinforced through the activity of fostering.

In response to Angela's plea for someone to "look through my eyes", someone who "listens to know how I feel", the therapist offers only a guarded an oblique reply, since, within a systemic approach, offering empathy and support to one member of the family would be seen as over-identification and undermining the therapist's manoevrability. Instead

of being able to offer something of herself - to say, "I want to know how you feel" - the therapist keeps the issue at a distance: "So you couldn't make [Sheila] understand how upsetting this is for you". The therapist subjects Angela in her reply not as a woman in her own right, but only as a mother "who is not being able to get close" to her son.

T: What I'd like you to do, Angela and then Dave, is to tell each other how it feels. Tell Dave how it feels for you.

A: How I feel - so shut off from him, I mean, not being able to communicate with him - you know, like the girls are able to give me love back - not being able to have Matthew to sit by me and cuddle me, teling me he loves me and things like this. This is what I don't think they understand. He's so cold I can't even get that close even though I do try. I don't like being nasty to him and shutting him off, but it's just because I don't get nothing back off Matthew. He doesn't want to know me.

T: So you feel there's... When you're getting that love...

A: [Interrupting] I'm not getting nothing - there's nothing there. It's as if there's just something there and it's stopping us communicating together, but what that is, I don't know. But I don't get no love off him. His Dad has to ask him - well, to say, "Do you love your Mum?" - it's him that's telling Matthew to say it, it's not Matthew that's saying it himself. Matthew doesn't give me no love, but he doesn't give me kisses, he doesn't sit by me. Like, if I'm run down, the girls will come and say, "Are you all right, Mummy?" and offer and that lot. I don't get any of that off Matthew - there's nothing there.

The therapist attempts to set up a dialogue between Angela and Dave at the level of feelings. Angela selects to express her feelings towards Matthew rather than Dave (perhaps lacking sufficient support from the therapist to risk disclosing her real experience of the marital relationship). However, the way that she talks about her frustration with Matthew, she might as well be talking about a partner relationship: what she is missing from Matthew (no mention of Dave) is for him "to sit by me and cuddle me, telling me he loves me and things like that". Interestingly, Dave does not seem threatened by Matthew being invited into the vacant position of 'spouse'; on the contrary, he actively tries

to set his son up by pushing Matthew into saying that he "loves" his mother, and thereby almost acting as a proxy for him.

Whereas Matthew appears powerful enough within the gender organisation of family subectivity to resist being subjected in this position ("He doesn't want to know me"), the girls apparently willingly accept being subjected in the position of 'mother' to their own mother: "Like if I'm run down, the girls will come and say, 'Are you all right, Mummy?' and offer that lot". This may be the most effective way, within the current organisation of family subjectivity, for them to have much closeness with their mother. The girls otherwise only occupy a very marginal and incidental position, and are hardly mentioned at all within a family discourse that is heavily patriarchally dominated. Overall, we may see how Angela and Dave are themselves so powerless and needy that, in a paradoxical way, they actually use their power base as parents in order to compete for the available Child subject positions within the organisation of family subjectivity.

T: So, when you don't get that, you begin to feel nasty?
A: Yes I do, and if he plays up and then he pushes me, then that's it: I let loose, but not just on Matthew, I take it out on the other two as well. I don't mean to, it's just that he builds me up that much.
D: [Interrupting] You've forgotten one - me.
A: Well yes [waves hand dismissively] I take it out on everybody.
T: And then you said that Dave sometimes comes into this: Dave sometimes says, "Tell your Mum".
A: [To Dave] Well you do, don't you?
D: Well, I say that to Matthew. I says, "Go on, go on and say that you love your Mum and give her a kiss - it will make her feel better". But Angela knows that I've sent him in to do those things. But...
A: [Interrupting] I can't do it. I just say, "No", because it's not Matthew doing it. I say to Dave, "You've told him to say that", so therefore I don't kiss Matthew and I won't hold him because I know damn well that somebody's asked him to come and do it. If he'd just do it on his own - but he has to be told to come and kiss me or to

> say that he loves me. [...] He won't do it on his own - like the girls just come up and kiss us anyway. [Pause.]

Rather than risk occupying the partner position himself (and perhaps be found wanting), Dave inserts Matthew in his place with instructions on how to give Angela a kiss and "make her feel better". This does not fool Angela who is well aware that Matthew is not acting spontaneously but has been sent: "It's not Matthew doing it". However, her plea, "If he'd just do it on his own", would more appropriately have been directed at Dave - but it is Matthew, and not he, who then gets the brunt of Angela's anger at the lack of emotional support that she is receiving. Hiding behind Matthew in this way, Dave manages to appear wronged and hurt when some of this anger actually spills over on to him (having already engulfed not just Matthew but the girls as well). Angela's continued projection of her feelings onto Matthew would indicate that she remains insufficiently supported to be in touch with her feelings towards Dave. Moreover, unless this process is confronted, Matthew's subjectivity will continue to remain distorted and abused as a 'decoy' or 'scapegoat' within the family organisation.

T: So Dave, how does it feel for you, what is it like through your eyes?
A: [Interrupting] With Matthew.
D: I know. Well, to me, he's frightened of Angela. He's scared stiff of her. That's how I see it. All right, Angela's the two girls most of the time and Matthew gets pushed to the one side. But he's frightened of Angela, in case Angela hits him hard. She hits the others, but she hits Matthew harder than she hits the other two, and I think that's why he's so cold against Angela. Because Angela can't give no love towards him because he's a disappointed child - or something like that - so he's probably thinking the same: "If she ain't going to give me no love, I ain't going to give her no love". So that's why he's the way he is - through my eyes.
T: I see. So you would guess that Mathew is thinking the same things as Angela: "If my Mum can't give me any love, why should I give her any?" and Angela is thinking, "If Matthew can't give me any love, why should I give Matthew any love?"

D: I mean, I want him to love Angela. I don't want to keep going up to him and saying, "Love your Mum". It's the only way I can get him to do anything. [...]
[Therapist is called out for consultation. Videotape runs out.]

Dave neatly redefines the question once again: instead of speaking about his feelings towards Matthew, he speaks "through Matthew's eyes". As he had done before, Dave uses Matthew as a 'mouthpiece' on to whom he can project what are probably his own feelings of rejection and revenge: "If she ain't going to give me no love, I ain't going to give her no love". Over and above projecting these feelings on to Matthew ("So that's why he's the way he is - through my eyes"), Dave relocates the issue of violence, away from his 'domestic sieges', and on to Matthew being "scared stiff" in case Angela "hits him hard". Using Matthew's subject position ("his eyes") allows Dave to speak from the refuge of an apparent Victim position, from which he does not have to take responsibility for his own violence. The therapist is unable to sustain the purpose of her original question and instead goes along with an organisation of family subjectivity in which Dave does not have to declare his feelings and all 'problems' are located solely in the relationship between Angela and Matthew.

SESSION 6

[The session starts with Angela reporting an improvement in Matthew's behaviour towards her. He has shown her some spontaneous affection the previous evening when they visited. There follows a discussion of arrangements for Matthew coming home.]

T: Great - they'll all be back together again. And the other piece of homework, I think, was to - you were going to think about what you said - it was this thing about when Dave came home from work, wasn't it? And he felt the pressure of having to tell Matthew to come and say sorry, or come and kiss you and say he loves you.

A: Yes.

T: And that didn't work for you because you knew it wasn't coming from Matthew and we wondered how Dave should deal with that - whether you had any ideas about...

A: [Interrupting] I told him just to talk to Matthew when he come in, but not to say, like, "Go and kiss Mummy", and hoping that he will do what he did last night - he'll probably do - well, I hope he'll do - in the future. I mean, I'm not going to push him or anything: I'm not going to expect miracles straight away. [...]

There would seem to have been a significant change in the organisation of the parenting subjectivity following the discussion in the previous session. This seems to have enabled Angela to insert Dave into a Parent position alongside her rather than undermining her: "I told him to talk to Matthew when he come in, but not to say, like, 'Go and kiss Mummy'". This is clearly empowering for Angela, and it also has a knock-on effect on the overall organisation of the family subjectivity: it stops Dave pressuring Matthew to occupy the vacant 'spouse' position, allowing him instead to return to transacting from Child positions. This may well be the key to his being able to relate spontaneously, *as a child*, when they came to visit him. However, this restructuring of the parenting subjectivity does not, in itself, empower Angela any further as a person in her own right within the organisation of the partner subjectivity.

T: How about you two, anyway? Did you think of the three things together that you wanted to talk about?

D: I forgot all about it until Angela said, coming over here.

A: Well, I did mention it, but I think we forgot about it with all the excitement over Matthew. [Pause.] But I'm not fussy what Dave wants to talk about.
T: Well, are you feeling that you need to discuss your relationship at the minute?
D: No, I'm all right at the moment.
T: You've had a lot of ups and downs in the past.
A: Yes. [Pause. Angela looks at Dave.]
T: Is that something that you've got to think about? [Pause.]
A: I suppose we have, yes. I don't really know what to say at the moment. I've been all Matthew, really; I haven't bothered with us, really, have I?
D: [Grunts] Yes. [...]
T: How did you imagine we'd spend the time today? [Pause.]
A: Dunno. [Angela laughs and then Dave joins in.]
D: Well, I imagined it would be about Matthew coming home, that's all.
A: Well, I know that you were going to discuss us, because you said, like, on Monday, but I forgot to ask him the questions - because I didn't mention it until tea-time, coming over here. So he didn't - so you didn't think about it, did you, until you was coming over.
T: So it sound like you've had a busy three days and maybe you haven't had time to discuss that together, or think about whether you want to discuss it, and, if you do, what you want to discuss. Would it be helpful to give you five minutes together now, on your own, in private, just to think about it?
A: Yes, if you like. [Therapist leaves them with paper and pens.]

It emerges that the therapist had set them some homework to do with the marital relationship, but that Dave had "forgot all about it". He is clearly unmotivated to discuss such issues, either feeling threatened or not seeing anything in it for himself: "I'm all right at the moment". Thus when Angela "did mention it" to him, he was not receptive, and she may have felt powerless to take it further. However, in the presence of the therapist, Angela is sufficiently empowered to be able to overrule Dave and accept, on behalf of the partner subjectivity, the therapist's suggestion that they do the work in the here-and-now.

[The therapist restarts the session with an intervention from the consultant which congratulates them on what has happened with Matthew, but warns them that "miracles can't happen overnight".]
T: Where did you get to in your discussions?
A: [Laughs nervously] Not really.
D: Not really very far.
T: Is there anywhere to get to?

D: Only that Angela doesn't want to know me.
A: I just don't think it will work between me and Dave, still. I still don't think it will. He wants to try.
D: [Raising voice] But you don't want to. As far as you're concerned, I can just go and clear off.
A: Don't say it like that.
D: [Raised voice] It's true.
A: I've never said that at all.
D: [Raised voice] All right, you've never said it in so many words. It's just that I'm not wanted.
A: I never said that neither. Don't start an argument in here.
D: Why not?
A: You've asked me to try and I've turned round and said, "I don't know". As far as I know, it still won't - might still not work. I mean it hasn't worked out for us now. I said I just can't change my mind, just like that.
D: Nobody said you'll have to. I've never said you have to anyway.

Attempting to renegotiate the terms of their subjectivity in the absence of the therapist, Angela and Dave seem to have remained stuck in their deadlocked positions. Angela's pessimism and defensiveness suggests that she remains alienated within a discursive structure that prevents her from articulating her deeper feelings or what she wants for herself (whether inside or outside the relationship). Her choices are still constructed for her by Dave; it seems still to be "love" on his terms, or the ending of the relationship. Thus Dave is able to translate her inability to "love" him (in the way that he desires) into "Angela doesn't want to know me... I can just go and clear off". In the presence of the therapist, Angela struggles to break out of this discourse ("I've never said that at all"), but all that she can say on her own behalf is "I don't know". Sadly, she is not offered any support in this struggle by the therapist.

D: I said I'll wait.
T: How long are you prepared to wait, Dave?
D: As long as it takes.
T: Does anyone know how long it's going to take? [Pause.]
A: No. [Pause.]

T: Is it satisfactory not to have a time limit - it could go on for ever and ever like this?
D: No, I'm going to make sure that it don't go on like that for ever and ever, even if Angela don't want to give it a go.
T: How are you going to do that?
D: I don't know. [Pause.] I'm going to have to try not to be jealous and whatever it is - possessive - that she keeps saying I am. I'm going to have to try, I suppose. [Pause.]
T: So these - jealous and possessive...
D: I'm jealous and possessive. I don't like it when she goes out all the time. That's how I start arguments because I'm jealous. [...] It's like if she goes to her Mum's and they say, well, they've got a do coming on and they say, "Tell Dave, it will be all right". I just don't like things like that all the time. I know it doesn't happen all the time - but half the time it does.
T: So how often does it happen?
D: It hasn't happened just lately, but when she does go out with her Mum and with her family, I keep thinking things in my head - what's she doing, who's she going with, is she with any lads - things like that, and it just builds up inside me and, when Angela comes home, I pick on her and say, "Who was you with, and kissing?" and things like this. I'm so jealous, you see. [...]

Rather than supporting Angela in making sense of her position, the therapist chooses to explore Dave's side of things, but in a way that deconstructs his control over the terms of the discourse - ones that have, until now, defined Angela as the unreasonable one. From the position of being able to wait "as long as it takes" for Angela to come around to his way of thinking, he comes to realise that he is powerless "to make sure that it don't go on like that for ever". From this point, he starts to acknowledge that it is he who may need to change his position if they are to reform as a partner subjectivity. He begins to recognise that his "jealous and possessive" attitude is extremely oppressive to Angela and, as he talks, it becomes clear how much it is simply a reflection of his internalisation of patriarchal ideology. While he can exercise the choice of being part of a peer group subjectivity as well as the family (for example, when he went out with his mates after the birth of Matthew), a similar choice is not open to

Angela within his understanding of a 'normal' marriage. His sense of control over family and partner subjectivities is profoundly threatened by Angela going out and enjoying herself as part of the organisation of her family of origin, without even seeking his permission first. As soon as she is out of *his* control, even for a short time, he immediately assumes that she must be subjecting herself in relation to another man. A woman in her own right (or a married woman choosing to act as part of her family of origin), are subject positions that cannot be conceptualised within his internalisation of patriarchal discourse.

D: I'm in love with Angela and I care, but Angela's not in love with me, you see. I don't know if she cares. She says that she loves me, but not in the way that somebody, who loves somebody, should. I don't know what she means by that, but...
T: Have you ever asked her what she means by that?
D: No, no. [Looks thoughtful.]
T: Would you like to ask her?
D: She wouldn't answer me anyway, [laughs] would you?
A: You never try, do you.
D: True, I never try. It's like you say, when you come home I have a go at her. I had a go at her last night. [...]
T: Do you do anything right for Angela?
D: No, I'm doing everything wrong.
[Dave goes over again with the therapist how he reacts when Angela goes out with her family.]

Having temporarily moved out of the terms of the patriarchal discourse, Dave is more open both to his own experience and, to a limited extent, to that of Angela. From his uncertain new position, he begins to be aware that "love" could mean something different for Angela, although he still sees his definition as right (ideologically sanctioned) and hers as wrong: "She says that she loves me, but not in the way that somebody, who loves somebody, should". The therapist encourages Dave to find out more about Angela's experience of "love", and to risk his own vulnerability by asking her directly. Had he followed this through,

this could have profoundly changed the organisation of their subjectivity, opening up the possibility of transacting at the level of emotionality. Instead, he retreats into a Victim position and, avoiding any real responsibility for his side of the relationship, he blames himself in a grandiose and unrealistic fashion: "I'm doing everything wrong". In this position he appears so helpless that when he states, "True, I never try" he is not challenged by either Angela or the therapist, and he is thereby able to avoid the therapist's invitation to speak to Angela as an equal partner.

T: What puzzles me is that - I don't know whether it puzzles you - but we hear fron Angela that it's not going to work between the two of you - it never will - and that several times in the past she's thought about leaving, and she has in fact left, and yet she's still here. That puzzles me.
D: No, but I... It's a bit towards me, I suppose. I mean, I go down and beg for her to come back - say I'm sorry and it won't happen again. But as soon as I've been drinking, it starts up again.
T: What starts up again?
D: Me picking on Angela. [Pause.]
T: Have you asked Angela what she would like...
D: [Interrupting] No, I...
T: If she would like you to be any different? Maybe she likes you being like this.
D: No, I don't think she likes me, [looks at Angela] especially when I've had a drink of beer. [Pause.] I'm nasty when I've had a drink. I don't mean to be evil, but next day she says, "Do you remember what you said?" I can't remember half the things I've said, so, practically, it's all beer talk anyway, but Angela remembers everything I said, [to Angela] don't you?

The therapist returns to the issues of the partner subjectivity, and invites Dave to sort out her "puzzle" by imagining what might be going on for Angela - again placing him in the position of having to take her experience seriously. He becomes less confident at speaking for her and starts to own some of his responsibility in bringing about the breakdown of their partner subjectivity. He describes a pattern whereby he

switches to the Victim position ("I go down and beg") in order to set up Angela in the conventionally feminine position of Rescuer (having him back) so that he can, once more, persecute her from a position of patriarchal power ("It starts up again... Me picking on Angela"). It is perhaps a mark of her disempowerment (perhaps more so at the level of emotional than of material relations) that he is repeatably able to sway her decision with such a transparent deception. Building on the greater openness in the organisation of Dave's subjectivity, the therapist invites him to risk a dialogue at the level of emotionality: "Have you asked Angela what she would like?" Again Dave baulks at entering into this, and instead speaks for Angela to prevent her speaking for herself. However his greater openness is reflected in the way that, rather than just impose his construction of her subjectivity, he more nearly sees the issue "through her eyes".

T: So how would you like him to be different, Angela?
A: As I told him - he's just jealous and possessive and all he used to think about was just one thing. [Pause.]
T: Between the two of you, or between you and someone else?
A: [Laughs] No, between me and Dave.
D: Nobody else. [Laughs.]
A: I mean, if I was to stop in with Dave, he doesn't talk to me, he's all the telly. If you sit by him, he just mauls you. He just doesn't leave you alone, d'you know what I mean? He just sort of mauls you. You can't sit by Dave without him touching you. I dunno, he just mauls you.
T: And that doesn't feel right to you at the time.
A: No, I think there's more to life than sex and everything. I said to Dave, "I ain't a sex machine".
D: I never said you was.
A: But that's the only time he's nice is when he wants it. But after he's had it, that's it.
T: So it feels a bit mechanical.
A: It just feels - I used to feel that he used to want me just for sex - that was the only time he was nice to me. Then, that's it - when he's got what he wants, that's it, back to square one.

The therapist abandons trying to enable Dave to make contact with Angela at the level of emotionality and instead offers Angela support to express herself directly. Angela speaks of the issue that is probably even more oppressive for her than Dave's drunken violence: his sexual abuse of her, constructing her as the object of his sexual activity, his "sex machine", without making any genuine contact with her at the level of emotionality or discourse - "He doesn't talk to me, he's all the telly. If you sit by him, he just mauls you". The only contact that he does make at other levels is itself abusive - being "nice" only as a way of getting sexual favours from her and then abandoning her "when he's got what he wants".

T: And are there times when you want sex?
A: No, it doesn't interest me. I mean, he often keeps saying I'm a lemon. [Pause.] I mean, a lot of people do [laughs in embarrassment] because I just don't like it, it doesn't interest me. I don't know whether I'm scared in case I catch again for another. I mean, I'm only 25 and I've got three kids now; I'm struggling now.
T: Do you think it is that?
A: It could be. It just doesn't - I don't enjoy it.
T: So it's not just fear of catching for another child, it's that you don't enjoy it too. Or maybe the two are somehow confused together?
A: It could be, yes. It could be just the way Dave does it. I mean, he doesn't do it friendly, he just attacks it, he's like a bull. I mean, everything that Dave does is so rough - he's not gentle at all. It's just as if he's thinking of himself and not me.
T: I see. So it doesn't seem like you're sharing very much.
A: No. [Pause, looks at Dave] He just attacks everything. He probably doesn't mean to, [smiles] but I mean, he's just rough.

Angela reveals the extent to which her desire has come to be so reconstructed within patriarchal ideology, that it is no longer recognisable to her as something that belongs to her. Sexual activity is something that she is forced to do, but "it doesn't interest me". As a woman, she is firstly constructed as a sexual object by which men may achieve their gratification: "He just attacks it... It's just as if

he's thinking of himself and not me". But also, even more oppressively, she must construct herself as a sexual subject, as someone who actively desires men (and only men) and whose desire is simply the reflection of men's desire: a desire for physical arousal through contact at the level of activity only, without significant contact at the levels of emotionality or discourse. When she fails to construct her desire in the requisite manner ("I don't enjoy it"), Dave immediately locates her within the structure of patriarchal ideology as 'deviant': as a lesbian (a "lemon"). This vividly demonstrates how sexist and heterosexist ideologies interlink in the patriarchal oppression of her desire.

T: Does it feel like a sharing for you, Dave, or how does it feel for you?
D: [Looks embarrassed, squirms in chair and smiles] I mean, I don't even know things like that... [Mutters inaudibly.]
T: Have you ever talked about this together before?
A: No, not really. [Pause.]
T: Shall we continue to discuss it. Would you like to discuss it a bit more? [Pause.]
A: If you want to look at it. [Looks at Dave.]
D: I ain't bothered if you... [Pause.] I'm probably no good at it anyway. [Smiles.]
T: It seems to me that we have one person here saying that you don't like sex, and it seems that Dave has shown that he does like sex.
A: Yes.
D: It wouldn't be right if I didn't like it. I mean... I mean, I could be gay. I mean, if I didn't have it with a woman, people could think, "He's probably gay then, having it with blokes."
T: So you're worried how people see you.
D: No, because I've never talked to anyone about it.
T: People don't find it an easy subject to talk about.
D: They all boast about it at work, "Oh I had a good ride last night with my missus" and it's the same thing every day at work, "And how about you, did you?" and things like that. I just walk away and let them get on with it. [...]

It is now revealed the extent to which Dave's own desire, as a (working class) man, is constructed for him as 'phallic' within patriarchal ideology. Sexual activity, so constructed, does not allow for any

sharing, or even any awareness of intimate feelings: "I don't even know things like that". Again when challenged at the level of emotionality, he retreats into the role of Victim, inviting the therapist to rescue him: "I'm probably no good at it anyway". Sadly, the therapist misses the opportunity to support Dave in learning about Angela's version of "love", and hence perhaps to enrich and empower his own transactions at the level of emotionality (and be able to offer some mutuality in the organisation of the partner subjectivity). Instead, she rescues him by redefining the situation, in conventionally patriarchal terms, as one between "persons", one of whom "does like sex" and the other does not. Issues of gender difference are excluded from this discourse and the meaning of "sex" itself is rendered 'common-sense' and unproblematic.

Faced with the sudden disappearance of the therapist's support, Angela has little choice but to agree with her and hence implicitly accept that the issue is about "sex" rather than "sharing". With the terms of the discourse now on more familiar ground, Dave is able to explain the forces that determine the construction of his 'masculinity' within his everyday experience as a working class man. He is subjected within an ideology that compensates for a collective experience of subordination, under the relations of capitalism, by an exaggerated domination of those in weaker structural positions under relations of patriarchy: women and gay men. His desire is constructed for him as 'phallic', excluding the possibility that he might feel attracted to other men, or that tenderness might emerge as part of the expression of his desire towards women: his sexuality becomes reduced to the terms of "a good ride".

T: Do you think that this is an important problem in your relationship?
A: According to Sheila it is, but I can't see any difference, and, I mean, Sheila shouldn't come out with things the way she has told me anyway, I mean, bringing her own personal life into it. I mean, I told her that I didn't like sex and this, that and the other, and she says, well, nor does she, but she does it with her husband - even if she has to lie back and think of England, she still does it. [The therapist laughs and then Angela laughs.]
She said that you've just got to try and she reckons that's all that's the matter between me and Dave.
T: And do you agree with her?
A: No. I don't know about Dave. [Looks over to Dave.]
T: D'you think that it is important for a person to... for sex to be part of their...
A: I suppose it is, yes.
T: D'you miss it in any way at all?
A: No. [Pause.] It doesn't worry me - I know I'm not a lemon - I ain't after women. It just doesn't interest me. [Pause.] I suppose it's because I've got no feeling - much feeling - for Dave, that's probably why I don't do it.
T: Do you think that if you had feeling for Dave, then it would come naturally?
A: Probably, yes.
T: And do you think that within you it is there, but you need to warm to the situation - you need the right circumstances for that to happen?
A: I don't hate Dave. But I don't love him.
T: Do you think that people have to love each other to live together happily?
[There follows a general discussion of whether people need to love each other to live together, or to have sex with each other.]

Angela's aside about Sheila demonstrates the pervasive ideological influence of the Care apparatus: not only did she have to reform their parenting subjectivity in line with the 'model' foster family, but she was also pressured to reconstruct herself within the partner subjectivity. However, Angela is now sufficiently empowered to start to be critical of the emotional price that Sheila appears willing to pay in order to construct herself as a 'woman-as-object' - the signification of the 'model' wife that is specified within patriarchal discourse. Angela also wants to know where Dave now stands on this: "I don't know about Dave", but the therapist does not allow space for her to get an answer. Instead, she returns to the terms of the patriarchal discourse of "sex".

Nevertheless, Angela manages to re-insert "feeling" into this discourse, suggesting that this might explain why she did not want "sex" with Dave. Although the therapist gives some limited support to this modification - making connections between Angela's "feeling" and her present "circumstances" - she does not set up terms of discourse that enable Angela to speak her desire directly. Angela is stuck between "hate" and "love", but neither seem to signify her true feelings towards Dave. The therapist's notion of a desire that "would come naturally" seems to miss Angela, perhaps since it provides no opportunity to consider any past experiences of (sexual) abuse and how these might have so distorted and destroyed her desire that she has no access to any forms of sexuality that feel in any way spontaneous. At this point, perhaps fearing to get into such issues, the therapist suddenly shifts the transactional level from emotionality to that of discourse - to a discussion about how people live in general. She hints that maybe they could reconstruct their partner subjectivity in a way that would allow them "to live together happily" without having to confront such difficult issues.

[The therapist takes a break for consultation and then returns.]

T: [Reading] We've been talking again and what we want to say to you is that we hear what you are saying about sex, but we are not sure who out of the two of you is most worried about getting close. Dave tries to get close, but he is worried about being rejected. If Angela tries to get close, you're worried about getting pregnant and we know that women can often go off sex after having a baby. What we wanted to say to you both is that we can see that there's a lot of uncertainty and we wondered whether you could give each other comfort without sex. But then we thought that maybe this is not the answer.

A: Is that it?

T: That's it.

A: Oh. [Laughs.]

D: I was waiting for the rest.

[The therapist goes over the intervention again and offers an appointment for the next week. They agree to this, although they do not in fact keep the appointment.]

The main aim of the intervention would seem to be to introduce terms such as "getting close" and "giving comfort" instead of "sex" within the partnership discourse. This is done within a strategic-style framework that does not pin down the position of the therapeutic team: they simultaneously suggest that Angela and Dave "give each other comfort without sex" and that "maybe this is not the answer". Rather than challenge the family's belief system overtly, a technique of suggestion is employed in order to slip in certain new possibilities for structuring the partner subjectivity in less conventionally patriarchal terms, which could be less oppressive for Angela in that they would enable some transactions of emotional intimacy to take place.

These new concepts do not refer to, or take account of, experiences of abuse or differentials of power in defining the emotional organisation of the partner subjectivity. Indeed the overall terms of the discourse remain conventionally patriarchal. It is expected that men will want "sex" (albeit as a way of getting close), but they face rejection from women who have excuses for not offering it ("Women can often go off sex after having a baby"). Thus the content of the intervention, together with the manner in which it is delivered, fail to give Angela any real support or understanding, either in dealing with her past experiences of oppression, or in renegotiating the terms of her current relationship. As long as these issues remain unaddressed, any possibility of real change in the organisation of the partner (and hence the family) subjectivity would seem remote - as this would depend on dealing with the power relations that underlie their individual and collective breakdown at the level of emotionality.

SESSION 7 (8 MONTHS LATER)

[A male student, Simon, acts as co-worker during this session.]

A: Who's going to start?

D: He is. [Points at Simon.] Simon is.

S: No, I'm not going to start. You know what's happened, I don't.

D: Well then, Angela, fire away.

A: Well, me and Dave are going through a divorce. We're going to fight for custody of the kids on [ ]. I have got the kids at the moment, but at the moment they are playing me up like anything because they don't want me, they want their Dad. I've shoved it and ignored it, but it's getting out of hand - it's just getting worse and worse. So I seen Dave, Monday, explained to Dave exactly how the kids were playing up and how I felt - was there anything he could do to help? [...] I've rung my solicitors to tell them I've written a letter to Dave explaining that I couldn't cope with the kids any more - I'd had enough. Dave reckons it's an easy way out for me, because he reckons that I just want to muck about with Bill. It isn't. I can't cope with them no more. He knows because we all sat there that day, me Dave and Bill. I mean, Bill's tried to help. He's even explained to Dave exactly how the kids have been. [...]

T: You and Dave met up together on Monday night to discuss this.

A: Well I rang up his works and asked him to come down and talk, yes.

The presence of a second male worker has an immediate impact on the power dynamics of the session: there is an assumption of control by the two men. Dave is able to appoint Simon, as the man, to start the session (although Simon is effectively a stranger to the family). It is only after Simon declines this offer that Dave gives permission to Angela to "fire away". This manoeuvre constructs Angela as speaking within, and on behalf of, an overall organisation of family subjectivity which is still controlled by Dave. Nevertheless, what then emerges from Angela's account is a number of significant changes in this organisation. Their separation does not, of itself, constitute any fundamental change, since they were only barely organised together as a partner subjectivity before. However, it does seem to have had a major impact on their construction as a parenting subjectivity. Although initially saddled with the main responsibility for the children - a

continuation of the existing organisation of family subjectivity - Angela seems now to have inserted herself into a more independent position, from which she can actually request that Dave take over the main responsibility for parenting. This is something that would probably have been impossible, had they still been living together. Although situating herself as powerless to negotiate with the children over their expressed demands that "they don't want me, they want him", she does seem quite assertive and empowered in the way that she took the initiative in setting up a three-way meeting between herself, her new partner and Dave, and then put her proposal to him.

T: So, Dave, is that the way you see it? What did Angela say to you on Monday?
D: She just asked me, will I take the kids - in so many words - and I said I'll have to think about it. It'll take about three months - if I have the kids, it will be in about three months time, as I explained to you. But I've made the decision. I'll have the kids and I'll keep on working and do the best I can and I'll look after them. But it won't be until three months as I've explained to her.
T: Yes. So how far was that a definite plan between the two of you? Were you able to make that a definite plan between the two of you?
A: No.
D: No, I said I'll tell her today. Well, I've been thinking all week and I went and seen the missus - we talked it out and she understands.
T: Who understands?
D: My girlfriend. She's having a baby as well, see. So we come to a decision and said, all right, fine, we'll sort it out.
T: So you checked it out with her because you see her being involved in the planning?
D: Yes. I'm not going to pack her in just because I've got the three kids now. I mean, Angela's got her life and I've got my life. I can sort it out and enjoy myself, so there's no way I was going to give her the elbow.

From his postion in patriarchal ideology, Dave was clearly taken aback by the challenge to the gendering of their parenting subjectivity, not just in the content of Angela's request but by the way that she delivered it: not pleading or apologising for herself, but asking

directly, "in so many words", from the position of an equal parent. If Dave had responded immediately, he would have allowed her to be in control of family decision making and, most importantly, in a position to pass over all childcare responsibility to him. This would have constituted an exact reversal of the organisation of their parenting subjectivity and an effective loss of patriarchal power for Dave. He is clearly not willing to lose his position, so by imposing a three month delay on his own terms, he retains overall control ("I've made the decision") and restates the underlying message that his needs and his convenience must come first ("I can sort it out and enjoy myself"). However he acknowledges that, while they still may be subjected together as parents, Angela is no longer bound up as part of his partner subjectivity: "Angela's got her life and I've got my life". It is interesting to see the position into which he slots his new girlfriend: he does not seek to incorporate her within a parenting subjectivity, either in addition to, or as a substitute for, Angela. Instead, he locates her solely within the organisation of a partner subjectivity.

[There is a discussion about accommodation, schools and custody arrangements, then the therapists are called out for consultation.]

T: Sorry we've taken quite a while, but we've really had quite a lot of trouble, Simon and I, convincing our colleagues behind the screen here that it's all going to be as straightforward as you're telling us it's going to be. Our colleagues think that you've made the right decisions on the whole, but each of them has some grave doubts. One colleague, who has worked in a children's home, said that what you've seen so far with the children's reactions is only the tip of the iceberg. [Doubts are then expressed about housing matters and Dave's childcare arrangements.] We thought that unless you were able to convince them about those sorts of things in Court - thinking of you, Dave - that that sounds like someone who is not sure what he wants. And although we accept what you're saying about waiting for those three months - the various things you've got to see to - I don't think the Court would wear that so readily. And then the other colleague wanted to know, when the children play Dave up and want to go back to their Mum - and, you know, it's our

> experience that all children in this situation will want to do that - what will Angela and Dave do then? And this colleague ended up saying that these children will come into Care sooner or later. [Pause.] I must say, I'm beginning to wonder that myself.

This intervention delivers a very mixed message, one which gives Angela and Dave some small affirmation as a parenting subjectivity ("Our colleagues think that you've made the right decisions overall"), but which uses a variety of figures of authority (each "colleague" and "The Court") to cast doubt on whether they are acting sufficiently 'responsibly' as parents for the planned reorganisation of their family subjectivity to be acceptable within external discourses: "These children will come into Care sooner or later". The overall tone is punitive: the power accorded to the authority figures effectively reaffirming their disempowered class position. It is possible that, as before, the negativity of the intervention is intended to be empowering in a paradoxical way; it may be so designed as to force Angela or Dave into the position of being angry in defence of their children, thereby reconstructing the emotional aspect of their parenting subjectivities and demonstrating their emotional 'fitness' to be seen as parents.

No attempt is made to facilitate or support the emergence of any emotionality. None of the emotional issues to do with the separation are recognised as belonging to Angela or Dave, but are projected solely on to the children, who are thereby set up to express, not just their own distress, but also that of their parents: "What you've seen so far with the children's reactions is only the tip of the iceberg"). Rather than supporting or enabling any reorganisation of family subjectivity, this intervention places the whole family in a trap in which any such

expression of distress by the children forces Angela back into the very partnership with Dave from which she is trying to free herself: "When the children play Dave up ... what will Angela and Dave do then?"

A: Well, that's what I said, because, at the moment, I'm struggling now. Bill's put a claim in for me and the three kids, but, at the moment, all that I'm getting is Family Allowance because they've stopped my book. But, I mean, I haven't got nothing for them at the moment. I'm struggling... I haven't got any money.
[Angela goes into details of her financial situation.]
T: Well, somebody's got to take responsibility for these children [...]
A: I mean, Bill took me and my three kids on - well, he was trying to, but it don't seem to be working. I mean, Bill keeps putting me off it and saying, "Try and cope", and I just can't cope. I mean, Bill doesn't want me to do it, but Dave just thinks I'm doing it to get out of it - which I think everybody does, but I ain't. I mean, if they were in my situation and see what I'm going through, you might understand. It's a pity the kids ain't here, because I'd love them to explain to you exactly how they feel - on their own, without me or Dave here - and then you'd see it. But I can't last out for nearly three months, I know I couldn't. [...]

The intervention leads Angela to have to justify, even harder, why she (and Bill) are unable to subject themselves as parents any longer. She explains how the State Apparatus of income maintenance forces her into economic dependence on men and, even then, lets her down so badly that she is actually unable to establish the requisite family subjectivity with Bill. The therapist's reply - "Well, somebody's got to take responsibility for these children" - implies that she is failing (once again) to take on the ideologically prescribed position of 'mother'. Caught by the ideological force of this coming from another woman, Angela is no longer able to suppress her feelings entirely, and, for a brief moment, she implores anyone (preferably the therapist) to understand "what I'm going through". She then switches (in line with the intervention) to put the children forward as the only family members whose feelings are likely to be heard within the current discourse.

A: It just doesn't seem to be working no matter what I try for them. [Raises voice] I can't win either way. This is why I asked Dave for his help and I can't see why I'm in the wrong. I mean, if Dave can't help me, [looks to therapist] I'm asking you if you'd help.
T: Right. When do you need this help to start from, Angela?
A: I suppose when it is all over in the Court. Well, it's got to start from now, because we're getting nowhere now. We ain't gone to Court yet and I don't know what's going to happen in there.
T: And what do you think is the worst that could happen if you don't get...
A: [Interrupting] I mean, the way I'm going on and the way Dave's going on, they'll put them into Care anyway. I've been told that.
D: [Interrupting] What d'you mean, "the way I'm going on"? I ain't done nothing. If [woman known to them] can cope with her three kids on her own, you can.
A: She ain't coping with them, [ ] is. [Pause.]
T: What about the comments my colleagues, Dave, made about the things that the judge in the Court will want to know about? [...]
A: Dave's got to prove to them that I'm an unfit mother, because that's what he's got me down for.
D: I've got you down for it because you are and you know it.
A: Well if I am, then you have the kids, if I'm an unfit mother.
D: I don't understand why you're struggling, Angela. You did all right when you lived in [ ], so...
A: Well, if I'm struggling all right, why am I an unfit mother?
D: You know that. [Pause.]
A: Well, I tell you what, [Angela gets up from her chair and walks over to Dave, who looks up at her but keeps his arms folded; she points her finger at him and her voice rises to a scream] you have the kids because I can't fucking cope! [Slams door and leaves the room.] [Dave and the therapist sit in silence for about two minutes.]

Without even having the children present to express anger and hurt on her behalf, Angela is placed in a position of sheer desperation. She starts to scream at some of the injustice of her position. She questions why, within the current discourse, Dave seems to have a right to expect her to help, but this does not work the other way around: "This is why I asked Dave for his help and I can't see why I'm in the wrong". She then asks the therapist directly for her help, but, although the therapist seems to be responding positively, she never asks Angela what help she actually wants *for herself*. In the absence of any clear recognition from the therapist, Angela shifts her ground and adopts the terms of the therapist's childcare discourse as a way of

expressing the urgency of the situation: "The way I'm going on and the way Dave's going on, they'll put them into Care anyway".

She no longer attempts to subject herself within the terms of patriarchal ideology and ascribes equal responsibility to Dave for what is going wrong with their parenting, rather than blame it all on herself. This leaves her very vulnerable, and dependent on the therapist to support such a statement against the inevitable counter-attack by Dave, who is able to draw upon all the assumptions of conventional ideology: "What d'you mean, 'the way I'm going on'? I ain't done nothing. If [ ] can cope with her three kids on her own, you can". In the event, the therapist does try to subject Dave as an (equally) responsible parent by reminding him that he will have to demonstrate his potential competence in Court. However, Dave is able to use the ideologically loaded term "unfit mother" to restore a power hierarchy between himself and Angela - one that defines her as still responsibile for childcare but simultaneously connotes her as 'inadequate". Angela fights unsuccessfully to find her own way through this double-bind: "You have the kids if I'm an unfit mother", but finds herself trapped and alone. Her only remaining choices are to submit or to explode, and the force of her emotionality directs her into the latter course. Her explosion of feeling, although appearing dramatic and stunning the others into silence, is not a powerful act. It is a manifestation of breakdown: an expression of hurt and defeat, not a triumphant victory over her subjection in an intolerable position.

T: I don't know where we go from here. I think I'd like to go and see Angela and see how she is. There are still things to talk about the

children, aren't there? It doesn't feel to me that that is resolved satisfactorily. [Pause.] What do you think that Angela was saying then, Dave? I mean, she said you could have the children. What did she mean by that?

D: I think she said I could have them right now.

T: I got that impression.
[Door opens and Linda comes in crying. Dave comforts her on his knee. The therapist goes out to see Angela who returns after a few minutes. Linda gets down and goes round table to Angela but does not make contact with her and comes back to sit on Dave's knee.]

T: Dave, one thing we heard you say to Angela was that she was an unfit mother, and then you said to her, "You have the children". That seemed like a contradiction, really. Why do you expect her to have the children if she's an unfit mother? Can you explain that?

D: No. [Pause. Dave takes Linda's hat off for her.]

T: Would you add anything to that? What are your observations on that comment?

D: I shouldn't have said it in the first place. [Sounds close to tears] I haven't come here to upset Angela, I haven't come here to upset the kids. I shouldn't have said nothing.
[Dave goes on to reminisce about how he supported Angela while she was living in a mental health rehabilitation hostel before they were married.]

To start with, both Dave and the therapist seem to be too stunned to respond to Angela's outburst of emotion - indicating just how far she had moved out of her accustomed (and expected) range of subject positions, and had transgressed the rules of the family subjectivity that had excluded any such direct expression of feeling. After some moments of trying to maintain transactions at the level of discourse ("there are still things to talk about the children"), the therapist goes out to give support to Angela and to help her to return. At the expense of making herself emotionally vulnerable (as the only one who has exposed her hurt and desperation), Angela has finally convinced Dave and the therapist that she is at breaking-point and has forced Dave to take seriously her request for him to have the children right away. This marks a (temporary) shift in the organisation of the family subjectivity (when Linda checks this out, she finds that it is Dave who will now provide for her immediate care). Still keeping the lid on any

acknowledgement of feelings, the therapist confronts Dave with the inconsistency of the ideological position that he had been imposing on Angela. This shifts Dave from his position of patriarchal power into one where he actually comes near to expressing his own vulnerability (starting to cry). However, he still manages to avoid dealing with the recent emotional conflict. He chooses the much safer ground of reminiscing about a time when Angela was not angry with him, but was in need of his support (which he had been able to offer).

[Simon talks to Dave about how good it is that a father wants to have custody and discusses possible arrangements. The therapists are called out for consultation.]

T: I'll read this out. It's to you and I, Simon. "The team think that we're pushing Dave too fast and too hard. He would be a strange sort of man if he wasn't scared to take on the full care of the children and taking them away from their mother. He realises that things have to be thought out carefully and slowly before the children are moved, so that everyone knows where they stand. At the same time, we can sympathise with Angela's frustration". [Pause.] Does that fit in with the way the two of you were feeling?

D: Yes.

A: Dave was hoping that everything would be solved today, yes.

[Further discussion of practical arrangements with Dave sticking to the need for a three month delay.]

T: Do you think we've managed to sort everything out in today's session?

[Dave is sorting Linda out with some drawing paper.]

A: No, not really. It's still the same. We still don't know what's happening. [Pause.]

T: Would you agree with that, Dave?

D: If she wants money to keep her going, I'll keep her until I sort myself out. [Wipes Linda's nose for her.]

T: So you're asking for time to sort yourself out.

A: I don't mind giving him time, it's just that I'm not giving him three months.

T: So what would be a compromise?

[Further negotiation results in a compromise of two months and all arrangements are agreed.]

A: That's fine with me.

T: That's fine with you?

A: Yes.

[No further family sessions are arranged. Dave and Angela are both offered individual follow-up and support. In the event, neither offer was taken up.]

The intervention serves to reinforce the shift in the organisation of parenting responsibility within the family subjectivity for which Angela had been asking - albeit out of desperation rather than out of any sense of positive choice. As a consequence of this, all but the last line of the intervention is directed towards Dave as the newly emerging 'responsible' parent. Thus, having abdicated from the subject position of 'mother', Angela is now effectively marginalised: she has lost the only role that gave her any significance within the organisation of family subjectivity.

The intervention starts with a "one-down" manoeuvre that tells the therapists off for "pushing Dave too fast and too hard", apparently placing them on a more equal power relationship with Dave. The purpose of this may have been to counteract the authoritarianism of the previous intervention, and to establish Dave in the position of a careful and responsible parent. The process of his taking on "full care of the children" is reconstructed within the patriarchal imagery of a heroic 'capture'. However, this contains a covert message encouraging him to be more open with his feelings (as he will be taking on the position of 'mother' as well as 'father' with respect to his children): he is given permission, as a man, to feel "scared" that he is taking his children "away from their mother". Positive connotation is used to reframe the way that he has put his needs first as acting "carefully and slowly ... so that everyone knows where they stand". This offers Dave a basis for negotiation that creates the impression that he is operating from the position of a responsible parent, a connotation of his subject position that, he acknowledges, "fits in with" the way he is feeling.

Nevertheless, it is unclear whether the strategic elements of this intervention will provide sufficient support for Dave to be able to maintain the position of 'responsible parent' for very long. It would seem that it has done little more than to bolster up an illusion of competance and responsibility - one that is based on so little real substance that it could break down at any time. There has been no thorough examination of the material, ideological and emotional aspects of how he will sustain this new organisation of family subjectivity - one that stands outside the conventional structures of patriarchy.

For Angela, her future subjectivity must inevitably be constructed around the notion of being an "unfit mother" - a connotation that could only have been challenged by a proper examination of all the material, ideological and emotional factors that had so far denied her the resources with which to care for her children (or to have anything for herself in her own right). The therapy had failed to address the issues underlying her powerlessness: it was "still the same" between Dave and herself. However, she did seem to be empowered, albeit on a temporary basis, when the therapist supported her in negotiating a "compromise" on the arrangements. Although the concession of a month to someone already at breaking point would seem to be of little value, the fact that she found herself sufficiently important to have some impact on Dave's position was probably of far greater significance. The question that remains is whether, had the therapist used a different approach throughout, and offered more direct support to Angela, would she still have opted for this particular outcome, or could she have been empowered to renegotiate her relationships with Dave and/or the children?

13: CONCLUSIONS FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

This research must be seen as a preliminary step in constructing a framework of critical theory by which to analyse the organisation of (and shifts in) family power relations - both leading up to and during the process of family therapy. My conclusions fall into two sections: an evaluation of the usefulness of the theoretical framework (conclusions for theory), and an overview of those elements of therapy that may have emerged as particularly empowering or disempowering (conclusions for practice). As was discussed in the Chapter on Methodology, this research has primarily been geared towards the former task, so any conclusions with respect to practice must be seen as only being of a preliminary nature.

Evaluation of the theoretical framework

To borrow Lynn Hoffman's phrase, the choice of a theoretical framework is an "art of lenses" (1990 p.1). However, while she uses this term to describe the multifarious viewpoints by which 'reality' may be viewed (as in a constructivist approach), I will use it in a different sense. If the metaphor is followed through, it may be seen that it is only one specification of lens that will bring a particular issue into focus. The purpose of this research was to test out whether a framework of critical theory could provide a suitably operational "lens" through which to identify shifting patterns of power relations within the

context of three different family case studies. Although clearly in need of refinement and further development, I would consider that this framework has served to bring certain issues of power relations into a sharp focus - a focus which would have been impossible using any "lens" derived from systems theory. Perhaps the single most important outcome of this research has been to highlight how issues of power may be seen to be fundamental in structuring the organisation of families and also in influencing their experience of distress and breakdown.

The organisation of each of the three families did not seem to reflect much possibility for empowerment based on internal relations of 'power together', either within the family as a whole, or within constituent subjectivities (e.g. the partner subjectivity or the women-of-the-family). Our only glimpse of such a possibility was in Lesley Morton's momentary solidarity with her mother in resisting the oppressive demands of her brother. By and large, from the evidence of the transcripts, these families may be seen to be structured mainly on the basis of relations of domination and subordination. A possible inference that may be drawn from this is that it may be precisely because of this lack of 'power together', that these three families suffered breakdown - a breakdown that was focused on the degree of powerlessness and lack of recognition experienced by particularly vulnerable family members.

From the material that is available from the transcripts, it is the power relations of patriarchy that stand out as having the most obvious impact on familial organisation, in terms of instituting power hierarchies based on gender and generation, and on an ideology of

heterosexism. In each family studied, there is strong evidence of the coercive domination of women and children by the male head of the household, although this is less overt in relation to the Morton family. This instance demonstrates that it is not simply the actions of individual men that are the source of the domination of women and children in families, but it is their insertion into the wider structures of patriarchy that renders, even such an apparently reluctant tyrant as Frank Morton, so all-powerful in relation to his wife.

Evidence on the impact of class position figures less prominently in our raw material, since the focus of the therapists' questions has tended to be on intra-familial differences (where class is generally not an issue) rather than on the family's subjection within class-based structures of ideology, economic activity and welfare. Nevertheless, certain issues of class do emerge, for example, in the significance of the children having private education to the overall power position of Faith Hirst. Using a class perspective, one may note the relative ease with which the Morton and Hirst families had been able to construct their subjectivities in line with bourgeois expectations of autonomy - even though both families had problems in establishing their separate identities at the outset, being forced to live as part of a parent's household. By contrast, the Watkins family would seem to occupy a significantly lower class position - what Rapp would define as "hard-living" working class. They would seem never to have been able to establish themselves in the bourgeois manner, instead remaining an integral part of wider networks of social support in order to survive - including both extended family and State Apparatuses. It was the terms

of their engagement with the latter that demonstrate most vividly the extent of their disempowerment in terms of their class position. What is missing from these case examples is any data on the significance of racist oppression in determining familial organisation, and the possibilities for individual and collective empowerment within that.

At the heart of the theoretical framework is the dialectical concept of 'subjectivity'. This mediates between the external structuring of an already existing array of potential subject positions, and the specific ways in which a family or family member may negotiate, at any one instant, a repertoire of subject positions through which they may express, develop and satisfy (some part of) their various desires and abilities. It is this dynamic that provides an alternative "lens" to that of systems theory: one that provides a language by which to speak of organisation, but does not reify or mystify the 'whole' ('individual', 'family' or 'society') as an entity-in-itself; one that deconstructs a given organisation so that it may be seen, not as somehow natural and pre-given, but as arising out of a particular set of power relations and struggles. What may be observed, in relation to each of the case studies, is the way in which families and family members move in and out of, renegotiate and are trapped by, the array of subject positions that exist for them given their structural position within the social formation. Whereas the concept of 'system' implies an ideal of harmony against which a particular 'dysfunctional' organisation is judged, the concept of 'subjectivity' highlights the specific sacrifices and distortions that are required in order to participate in a particular context within an oppressive social formation.

From a systems perspective, the organisation of the Morton family would simply be seen as 'dysfunctional', with a number of family members displaying symptomatic behaviour due to the lack of a conventional hierarchy of authority within the family. Using the concept of 'subjectivity', the breakdown of the Morton family may be seen to relate not only to Frank's inability to insert the family subjectivity into a patriarchally defined slot, but also to the absence of any subject positions available within the family which allowed Mary any significant degree of recognition or self-expression. It may be seen that it was this combination of factors that resulted in the children being inserted into their particular subject positions and adaptations - as 'carers', 'minders' or 'peace-keepers' - ones which neither offered them sufficient possibilities for expressing their own desires or capacities, nor enabled them to participate unproblematically within the accepted structures of the social formation. The intervention of the therapist served to modify the only 'problem' in power relations that was apparent with the "lens" of systems theory: Frank's failure to impose patriarchal authority over Derek and the children. What becomes clear, with the perspective of subjectivity, is how oppressive this 'restoration' of authority could be for other family members, and in particular for Mary. It is thus possible to weigh the advantages in terms of social survival to be gained by conforming to this required 'blueprint' against the cost in terms of internal repression and subordination that this may entail.

The theoretical framework comprises not just the overarching concept of subjectivity, but also some understanding of specific subject positions that is derived from psychoanalysis and Transactional Analysis. While

the distinction of ego-states has been useful as a descriptive tool, they have not, in themselves, proved to be of great analytical value in exposing the underlying power relations in any of the case studies. However, from Lacan and the object-relations school, we have derived concepts that can expose the stereotypical positions into which women and men are inserted within a patriarchal social order: how men are inducted into some variant of the position of domination ("The Name of the Father" or "The Phallus"), while women are consistently constructed around various split objectifications (good/bad, mother/sex object).

We saw how, under pressure, Martin Hirst fell back to a position of impersonal but unquestioned authority ("The Name of the Father") in his dealings with his wife and son - a position whose ideological legitimation was so powerful at an unconscious level that he was able to count on the male therapist's instant agreement that "that sort of thing has to be wiped out". Dave Watkins, like Frank Morton, seemed to be uncomfortably aware of the existence of the signification "The Name of the Father", but unable to take on such a position for himself. However, in his discussion of issues of sexuality, Dave showed how his desire was constructed in terms of "The Phallus", a desire which seemed to alienate him just as much from his own feelings as it did from the 'object' of his sexual activity, Angela.

Faith Hirst was most dramatically placed in the position of "bad" object by her three year old son when he urinated over her. However, in a more subtle way, she had already been placed in a similar position (that of 'bad mother') by her husband, who was able to subject her to the full

force of patriarchal ideology for not exercising 'proper' control over her son. Demonstrating the pervasive operation of patriarchy, it was primarily the State Apparatus of Social Services (whose key representatives were all women) which forced Angela Watkins into the 'bad mother' objectification, although it was Dave who actually threw the term "unfit mother" at her during the final session. It was Dave who constructed her as the object of his 'phallic' sexual desire - as the feeling-less object to which he could be "rough" and insensitive when he obtained his pleasure (although Angela was also invited to take on this objectification in the discourse of the foster mother, Sheila, who herself 'willingly' excluded any aspect of her own desire when she chose to "lie back and think of England").

Other elements of the theoretical framework focus on matters of process - the constantly changing pattern of transactions taking place within, or external to, the family subjectivity. These both reflect, and at the same time reproduce, a specific organisation of power relations, whether they be of 'power over' or 'power together'. Reformulated from its origin in Transactional Analysis, the concept of 'role' has emerged as especially revealing in terms of an analysis of power relations. The case studies illustrate how transacting from role positions can serve to perpetuate existing inequalities in power by getting in the way of any genuine renegotiation of power relationships. For example, even by recourse to the Victim position (the one with least potential for 'power over'), Dave Watkins was able to slide out of any genuine renegotiation with Angela or the female therapist over what might be meant by "love". In general, the existing power structure may be seen to be reflected in

family members having differential access to specific role positions. We saw how Martin Hirst was able to switch into the role position of Persecutor in order to maintain his 'power over' his son, whereas Faith could only compete with Colin for the much less powerful Aggressor position. Similarly, given the vacuum of patriarchal power within the Morton family, while Derek was engaged in a pattern of mutual rescuing with his mother, it was he and not she who was able to switch into the role of Persecutor (when she had failed to slice the bread in exactly the right way).

The texts of the transcripts only give a small proportion of the available clues concerning the operation of driver-adaptations. These provide a means of analysing how, on a minute-by-minute basis, individual subjectivities come to be distorted as part of the overall organisation of a family subjectivity. As we saw with the Morton family, these distortions may be gender-related. Frank and Derek would seem to have moved into adaptations such as Be Perfect and Be In Control which, while blocking much of their capacity to express themselves, nevertheless sustained them in positions of effective 'power over' Mary. By contrast, within the organisation of family subjectivity, Mary only had recourse to adaptations, such as to Please others, which only reinforced her position of subordination. Of particular interest is the different implications of the Be Strong/Keep Quiet adaptation for men and for women. Whereas this adaptation served to exclude any feeling or vulnerability from the organisation of Martin Hirst's subjectivity, enabling him to act from the position of "The Name of the Father", the passive version of the same adaptation rendered Angela Watkins passive

and "depressed" - not having access to her feelings actually exaggerated her state of powerlessness.

While it is not clear from the transcript whether the breakdown of the Hirst family could be conceptualised in terms of an exaggeration of such adaptations, this perspective would seem to be of value in analysing the breakdown of the Morton and Watkins families. The 'protest' behaviour exhibited by Derek Watkins (his obsessional routines), and by Angela Watkins (her "depression" and attempt at suicide), may both be understood as driver-adaptations taken to the extreme, so that instead of their leading them to 'fit in' with what was expected of them (at the expense of their own self-expression), the exaggerated adaptations placed them beyond the pale of bourgeois subjectivity.

Connected to the concept of driver-adaptations, is the differentiation of transactional levels into activity, discourse and emotionality. It may be seen how the dominant adaptations of the men in each family (Be Perfect, Be In Control, Be Strong) accorded with the establishment of discourse and rationality - talking about activity/behaviour - as the transactional level at which each family conducted itself in relation to an outsider (the therapist). It was generally only in resposnse to deliberate interventions by the therapist that the transactional level shifted to allow any expression of feelings. In working with the Mortons, Minuchin only permitted the entry into the session of certain (conventionally masculine) emotions such as frustration and anger, but not the (feminine) emotions of vulnerability, sadness or hurt. With both the Hirst and Watkins families, the respective therapists made real

efforts to open up the possibility of transacting at the level of emotionality but, in each case, it was only the woman who took advantage of this, whereas the man retreated deeper into personality adaptations that cut off any awareness of even having feelings. It may be seen that such a transactional imbalance served to maintain an overall imbalance of power, with only the women having revealed any vulnerability.

The reformulated concept of projection is of value in analysing why, in all three families, it fell to a child to 'protest' about their mother's distress and powerlesness, and signal to the outside world that the family could no longer carry on with its current internal organisation. We saw how projection, taking place in a context of unequal power, resulted in pre-school children becoming the recipient of feelings displaced from the oppressive organisation of their parents' partner subjectivity. In the course of the session, Faith Hirst had to put forward Colin as being in danger that "he will be hurt" in order to gain some recognition, within the terms of a male-dominated discourse, for her own feelings of being "on the edge". Dave Watkins revealed how he effectively used Matthew as a 'human shield' to soak up Angela's anger at the way that her needs were being totally discounted within their partner subjectivity. Both Faith Hirst and Angela Watkins may be seen to have projected on to their sons many of the attributes that actually related to their husbands, in particular the possession of patriarchal power. At some point, each constructs her son as if he were (or should be) mature enough to display the idealised attributes of a partner that actually offered her the recognition that her real partner failed to do.

Towards an empowering practice in family therapy

Given that the methodological emphasis of this research has been on the processes of change within therapy rather than on final outcomes, no categoric conclusion may be reached as to the value (or otherwise) of family therapy as an enterprise, or of specific forms of intervention, in terms of shifts in power relations that may (or may not) be sustained outside the therapy sessions themselves. Nevertheless, we are in a position to look at the impact of various interventions on the minute-by-minute organisation of family power relations within the context of the therapy sessions, and thus to reach preliminary conclusions as to whether family work may have the potential to empower oppressed and vulnerable family members, and/or to empower the family as a whole in relation to external structures - if such changes could be sustained when the family is resubjected within the prevailing discursive, economic and emotional structures of their everyday living.

All three therapists made certain interventions that would seem to have had an impact on intra-familial power relations. By forming strategic alliances with Derek Morton's siblings, Minuchin was able to empower them in their dealings with their brother, enabling the substitution of transactions of mutuality (including having arguments) instead of their being silenced by the exercise of his "tyrannical" or "manipulative" power. However, by contrast, Minuchin overtly modelled the position of "The Name of the Father" and, used this to coerce Frank into taking such a position of 'power over', both in relation to his wife and to his adult children.

The student therapist achieved an immediate and empowering impact on the minute-by-minute organisation of the Hirst family, both when he addressed Faith as a woman in her own right (in relation to her work experience), and when he asked Martin how he felt about domestic and childcare matters. These moves offered Faith and Martin the possibility of transacting in previously prohibited ways - ways that, with further support from the therapist, could perhaps have opened up for them the possibility of a fuller and more mutual transactional repertoire within the organisation of their partner subjectivity. This would also have required Martin to give up some of his patriarchal power over Faith. In turn, any reduction in Martin's use of "The Name of the Father" position would probably have been reflected in a knock-on transformation of the terms of his relationships with the children - thereby also releasing Faith from her burden of having to exercise his patriarchal power by proxy, in the suppression of the desire of their son.

What is less clear is the impact, empowering or otherwise, of the formal interventions that were delivered to the family. Although they highlighted issues of inequality, they were not grounded in any awareness of wider patriarchal (and other) power structures because of their formulation within a systemic analysis. The absence of such an understanding made it extremely difficult for Faith to achieve any significant renegotiation of her position. By exposing only one part of the picture, there was a danger that she would see her inability to change as her own personal failure - as resulting from the 'inadequacy' of her personality. The interventions also sought to alter family members' collective view of themselves - so as to connote their internal

differences in a positive light. This does seem to have been reflected both in an acceptance that some conflict could be 'healthy' - increasing the possibility of dissident voices being heard within the organisation of family subjectivity - and a shift in the power position of the family as a whole in their sense of being able to participate in external discourses: Faith is left encouraged that her family could be considered "normal". However, the empowering effect of this for Faith is mitigated by the fact that little has been done to address her personal oppression, particularly within the context of the partner subjectivity.

The female therapist achieved some success in confronting the oppressive form of "love" that Dave Watkins was demanding, and in enabling Angela to start to articulate her own very different experience. However, this was not sufficiently supported in order to achieve any fundamental change in the power relations between them at the level of emotionality: Angela was still left with the choice of enduring further emotional and sexual abuse or going for a separation. (However, this exploration may perhaps have empowered Angela to make her later decision to leave Dave.) The degree of personal support or recognition that the therapist was able to offer to Angela seemed to be limited both by the remoteness that derived from her systemic style of working (and her consequent inability to commit herself on issues of oppression), and by her being situated as part of the childcare apparatus of the Social Services Department, one which had been, and was currently, involved in making punitive judgements as to whether or not Angela was performing as a 'fit' mother. Again, it difficult to assess what was the overall impact of the various formal interventions. The earlier interventions had an almost punitive

tone and, whether or not they were designed to elicit an angry reaction (and hence perhaps stir up a motivation for change), their actual impact did little to shift the powerlessness shown by Angela, and by the family subjectivity as a whole, in dealing with their oppression and distress.

An overview of these case examples suggests a number of issues that would need to be addressed in the development of a more politically sensitive practice. Firstly, there is the issue of the location of the therapist(s) with respect to structures of class, race and gender. While the case studies do not provide any data on issues of race, they do provide some pointers as to the impact of the class position and gender of the therapist. It was in relation to the work with the Watkins family, that it became apparent that the therapist (and her consultants) were actually located as part of an Apparatus of State control which placed them in a position of oppressive 'power over' the family. This was reflected both in the punitive tone of some of the early interventions, and in the authority vested in the Team Manager to determine how Angela should construct her emotionality towards Dave in order for them to be viewed as a potential parenting subjectivity.

The different subject positions open to male and female therapists are illustrated when the female therapist is joined by a male student for the last session of her work with the Watkins family. Despite her long working relationship with the family, she was immediately overlooked in the opening discourse, with Dave turning to the student to open the session. In his style of working, Minuchin used his masculinity as a model and as a competitive challenge in his dealings with the male

members of the Morton family (and also modelled how to put down and marginalise Mary). A female therapist would not have had access to the range of patriarchally sanctioned subject positions that he employed so as to exert 'power over' various family members. Using his access to positions of male power in a different way, the therapist with the Hirst family was perhaps able to challenge certain of the patriarchal features of the family organisation, for example in inviting the man to say how he felt about what was going on in the home. Such a question from a woman might more easily have been dismissed - a dismissal that would have been sanctioned by the prevailing assumptions of patriarchal ideology. Situated within such power relations, there would seem to have been occasions in which the female therapist fell into the position of colluding with Dave Watkins (for example, on the issue of his violence). However, at other times, she was able to use her confidence at addressing emotional issues to help him to compare his internalisation of ideology with his more personal experience, and hence to open up a discussion of issues of emotional intimacy in a way that neither of the male therapists even attempted.

While, inevitably, therapists may start from positions of power relating to their role within a professional agency and their wider positions with regard to structures of race, gender and class within the social formation as a whole, some steps may be taken to confront the issues that may arise from this. For example, some degree of 'matching' may be desirable, so that those family members suffering oppression are offered the opportunity of working with someone who shares at least some of their experience. This would be more likely to be achievable if the

therapy is offered by co-workers who embrace some variety of experience - say a mixed race or mixed gender working pair. It is crucial that such power issues are open for discussion as part of the therapeutic agenda: how do different family members feel about working with someone who may have the potential to exercise power over them in specific ways (and also how, say, black or female therapists may feel about working with family members who may act oppressively towards them). Again, such discussions may be made easier if there is more than one therapist present - and the therapists may themselves share how they feel in relation to potential issues of power between themselves. Any statutory authority (for example, in relation to child protection) would need to be examined in terms of its implications for transactions of domination (and, equally importantly) recognition between therapists and specific family members.

There is a need for a critical appraisal of agency structures and professional practices to see how far these exacerbate any imbalances of power. Overly hierarchical organisations may disempower both workers and, to an even greater extent, consumers. Similarly, professionals' use of strategic manoeuvring, one-way screens or hidden consultants will inevitably place them in positions of 'power over' family members. Whatever the reduction in oppression that may be achieved in a rearrangement of family subjectivity, if this process is imposed from outside and cannot be owned fully by the family members themselves, it is not likely to be empowering in any lasting sense. Therapists should perhaps express a commitment not to use their power in oppressive ways,

and be willing to accept challenge from any family member who may feel on the receiving end of some form of domination or manipulation.

The second set of issues that come to the fore concern therapeutic strategy: how to balance the empowering of a family as a unit in its participation in an oppressive social formation, with the redressing of internal patterns of inequality within a family. In practice, these aims may sometimes appear to be in contradiction. In his work with the Hirst family, the therapist achieved a redefinition of their collective self-esteem that would seem to have empowered them once more to participate in the external transactions required of them within the social formation. However, by not addressing the issues of patriarchal oppression within the family, the position faced by Faith (and, to some extent, the children) remained much the same. It may also be seen that, with their reconstructed subjectivity, the family would not be empowered to challenge any external structures of oppression that they might encounter. For example, if Faith came up against sexist discrimination if she tried to return to employment, her lack of recognition for herself as a woman in her own right, within the organisation of the family, would reduce her ability to resist and fight back. From this discussion, it may be seen that a genuinely empowering outcome would not be one that simply allows a family to slot back into the external structures of the social formation, but one which also equips them to challenge and renegotiate the terms of this participation. This can only be achieved by a significant renegotiation of internal power structures within the family organisation, with increased possibilities for 'power together' instead of relations of 'power over'.

A key issue for practice is how to set up a process of therapy that is emancipatory and involving, and that is open and honest in relation to power issues, with a family group which comprises both oppressors and oppressed. What has been central to feminist and other radical therapy movements have been the principles of openness, honesty and equality of power between therapist and client - principles of 'power together' that are derived from the political practice of consciousness raising. Such practice is relatively straightforward when clients share a common structural position of disempowerment. However, in seeking to achieve change in settings that comprise people in positions of 'power over' one another, a critical perspective suggests that a ruling group may not willingly give up its control, and will have access to the means whereby to reassert its control if this is threatened. Gramsci's conclusions in relation to the empowerment of subordinated groups within the structures of the State may be equally applicable to proceses of change within families: what is likely to be more successful in the long term is an incremental "War of Position" - facilitating a gradual renegotiation of specific positions within the material, ideological and emotional relations of families, and in the specific external structures within which families may be subjected.

While, in order to engage with those presently subordinated within the organisation, it would be necessary to indicate at the outset that the goal is the renegotiation of power relations, this must be done in a sufficiently gentle way so as not to frighten off those currently in positions of domination (and without whose participation no change may be negotiated). What would seem to be crucial is to stress the

potential advantages in terms of closeness and mutual recognition that might follow from a more egalitarian internal organisation - and that any process of change should be gradual and incremental. Similarly, it must be made clear that the therapist is not simply seeking to impose an alternative (but just as restricting) 'blueprint' on familial organisation - that any changes must arise out of family members' awareness of their own experience and consciousness of both the reality of their subordination (or domination) and their possibilities for mutual support and recognition with others.

This raises the issue of how the therapist may 'join' with the existing organisation of a family subjectivity: how to engage respectfully with a family while not seeming to collude with the oppressive aspects of its structure. Both male therapists started their work by setting up an initial relationship with the man in a way that implicitly validated (and did not question) his position as head of the household. (We do not know how the female therapist made her first contact with the Watkins family.) If empowerment in therapy is seen in terms of an incremental "War of Position", then it would seem to be important to join in a way that is not overtly disrespectful of the man (and avoids any head-on confrontation), but which implicitly starts to challenge the assumptions of patriarchal authority. It may perhaps be sufficient to make some comment to draw attention to - or, more powerfully, to invite other family members to comment on - what happens when Dad is given such priority.

This would suggest the need for a family therapy practice that is strategic, not in the sense of secret manipulation by the therapist, but in the sense of setting up a gradual and incremental set of experiences for family members that might enable them to renegotiate their power relations in small steps. This might involve working separately with certain sections of the family as well as working with the whole family together. For example, in the instance of a family in which some from of sexual abuse has taken place, it might be appropriate to work separately to support the victim and confront the perpetrator, then work with the victim and other siblings or a non-abusing parent to establish some structures of 'power together', before attempting to facilitate a renegotiation of family power relations with the whole family present (in the event of the rest of the family choosing to permit the perpetrator to rejoin them). Rather than, at the outset, confronting all oppressive aspects of a family's organisation at once, a more gradual and gentle confrontation of specific issues as they arise may perhaps be more productive in the long run. Such an approach may be seen not to be devious or manipulative - it is simply relating the process of empowerment to the pace of family members. Any attempt to force the pace might itself be experienced as abusive, not just by those family members currently in positions of domination, but also by those in subordinated positions whose empowerment is to be facilitated.

In such ways it may be possible to confront the dilemmas of working with an organisation that is structured on the basis of unequal power (dilemmas that we have seen apply equally to working towards the empowerment of individuals). While there is no conclusive evidence that

any of these pieces of work was empowering in any overall sense (there were gains and losses in each case), this research has demonstrated that, on a minute-by-minute basis, certain therapeutic interventions could have specific impacts on familial power relations - sometimes empowering and sometimes quite the reverse. Evidence that some observed interventions could be (temporarily) empowering suggests that, in principle, it is possible to engage with an organisation structured on the basis of unequal power in such a way as both to increase the opportunities for negotiation for its most disadvantaged members, and to enhance options in terms of its participation in wider social and economic structures. Evidence of even small and temporary shifts may provide a foundation for developing more effective approaches that could achieve greater and more lasting changes.

By locating such interventions within a theoretical framework in which power relations are central (rather than peripheral as with systems perspectives), it may be possible to develop a more 'critical' tradition of family therapy practice. Although marking a radical shift from current approaches, there would nevertheless seem to be opportunities to incorporate elements of existing practice, not only from feminists and others who have challenged the systemic orthodoxy, but also those aspects of the psychoanalytic and gestalt approaches that may potentially be reformulated within a framework of critical theory. The development of such a 'critical' family therapy would need to proceed hand-in-hand with evaluation studies, both in terms of process (as with this research) and in terms of outcome evaluations that examine how (and whether) empowering changes may be sustained in the longer term.

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